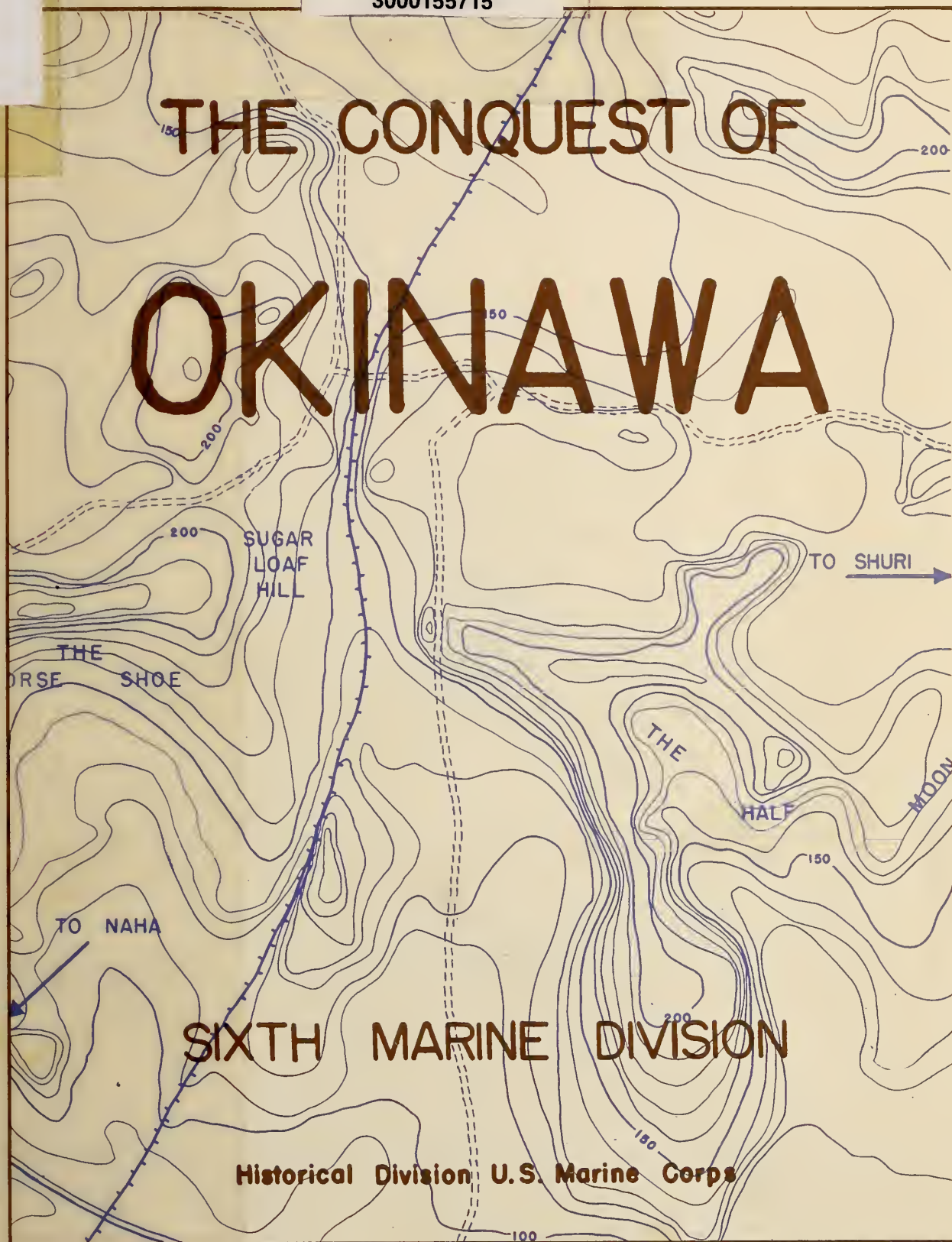


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THE CONQUEST OF OKINAWA



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THE CONQUEST OF OKINAWA

An Account of the SIXTH MARINE DIVISION

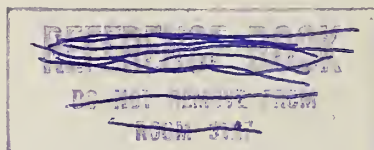


By
Phillips D. Carlton, Major
U. S. Marine Corps Reserve

HISTORICAL DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, U. S. MARINE CORPS

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FOREWORD

THIS is one of a series of monographs prepared by the Historical Division that deals with the activities of Marine Corps units in World War II. Early in March, 1945, Colonel John Potts, at that time officer in charge of the Historical Division, arranged to send out historical teams to work with the various units of the III Amphibious Corps during the Okinawa Campaign. The mission of these teams was threefold: To observe and take notes on the operation; to interview as many officers and men of the participating units as possible; and to collect valuable orders, papers, and other documents pertinent to the campaign. Major Almet Jenks, USMCR, covered the III Amphibious Corps Headquarters, Captain Phillips D. Carleton, USMCR, went to the Sixth Marine Division, and Sergeants Paul Trilling and Kenneth Shutts were with the First Marine Division.

This monograph is the work of Captain Carleton. While on Okinawa he lived with the men of the Sixth Marine Division, watched them fight and listened to their accounts of the action. He was with the Twenty Ninth Marines on Motobu Peninsula, the Twenty Second Marines during the fight for Naha, and spent considerable time with the Sixth Reconnaissance Company. Most of the material in this monograph is the result of Captain Carleton's personal observations or was gained through his interviews with the officers and men who fought in the Okinawa battles.

Within certain enforced limits this monograph is factual. No one individual can be everywhere at once, nor will his version of what happened during a given battle agree with everyone else's version. In its present form this is a preliminary monograph; there are some parts that are not treated as comprehensively as is desired. It is hoped, therefore, that those persons who read it and have first-hand information which will make the story more complete and accurate, will forward their comments, constructive criticisms, and suggestions to the Historical Division within sixty days after the receipt of the monograph, so that it may be revised and published in a more finished form.

HOWARD N. KENYON, Colonel, USMC
Officer-in-Charge, Historical Division

LIST OF MAPS

	Facing Page
Map No. 1. Movements of the 6th Marine Division	2
Map No. 2. Okinawa Shima - Area Captured by 6th Marine Division 1 April - 21 June	6
Map No. 3. Place Names of Northern Okinawa	12
Map No. 4. 4th Marines Battle for Mt. Yae-take 14 April 1945	21
Map No. 5. Battle for Mt. Yaetake 16 April 1945	22
Map No. 6. Final Drive (Sixth Marine Division Motobu Peninsula)	23
Map No. 7. Terrain, 29th Marines Sector	24
Map No. 8. "G" & "E" Companies, 4th Marines	26
Map No. 9. Stylized Terrain Diagram	32a
Map No. 10. Patrol Action	33a
Map No. 11. Ambush	34a
Map No. 12. 22nd Marine Patrols	35a
Map No. 13. Figure 1	48
Map No. 14. Figure 2. Direction of Battalion Attacks (Hasty Sketch)	52
Map No. 15. Enemy Fields of Fire (Artillery and Anti-Tank)	54
Map No. 16. Okinawa - Battle for Sugar Loaf Hill (Attack of 2nd Bn. 22nd Marines 14 May 1945)	60
Map No. 17. Division Front 16 May 1945	64
Map No. 18. Okinawa - Battle for Sugar Loaf Hill (Attack of 17-19 May, 1945)	72
Map No. 19. Attack of 22nd Marines 29 May - 1 June 1945	82
Map No. 20. Diagram of Military Corridors on Oroku Peninsula	102
Map No. 21. Area 3-29 - 2-29 Oroku Peninsula	108
Map No. 22. Simplified Diagram of Terrain on Oroku over which 22nd Marines Fought	110
Map No. 23. Zone of Action, Fourth Marines Oroku Peninsula 4-14 June 1945	111
Map No. 24. Mezado Ridge, Hill 69, & Kuwanga Ridge (Hasty Sketch)	118
Map No. 25. Kiyamu Ridge & Southern End (Hasty Sketch)	119
Map No. 26. Battle for Ara-Saki Peninsula 16-21 June 1945	120

PANORAMIC VIEWS

	Facing Page
Panoramic View Yae-take	20
View from Queen Hill	109

In this monograph such numerical symbols as 1/29 or 3/4 etc., are used sometimes instead of the more conventional designations, i. e. (in this case) First Battalion, Twenty Ninth Marines, and the Third Battalion, Fourth Marines. The above symbols were often used in conversation, both during and after the operation.

CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I

BATTLES ON MOTOBU PENINSULA AND IN THE NORTH

The 6th Marine Division was formed 7 September 1944, but though it was activated at that date, the units composing it were for the most part experienced and well-trained. The 22nd and the 4th Marines had been reinforced regiments. They had already worked together when as the First Provisional Brigade they had fought at Guam. The 29th Marines had been formed at Camp Lejeune and had been trained there, but the first battalion of the regiment had been formed from cadres of officers and men taken from the 2nd Division shortly after Tarawa; it had at first been called the 2nd Separate Infantry Battalion but on the way to Saipan its designation had been changed to the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, and attached to the 2nd Division it had fought notably. It was this battalion which had been first on the summit of Mt. Tapotchau. In large part, the Engineer Battalion, the Pioneer Battalion, the Tank Battalion, and the Artillery Regiment of the new division were formed from the reinforcing elements of the two original regiments.

The 4th Marines, reinforced, activated 8 January 1944, was also formed from veteran units, the four Raider Battalions, when the Commandant of the Marine Corps decided to abolish both the Parachute and the Raider Battalions as such. The paratroopers had never been employed as air-borne troops;¹ the raider battalions had seen little of the service for which they were originally intended; that is, raids into enemy territory, but had become magnificently trained shock troops. The parachute battalions were deactivated and the members of them formed cadres within the newly formed 5th Marine Division. From the raider battalions was formed the regiment which took the name of the famous Marine Regiment that had been lost at Bataan. The 1st and 4th Raider Battalions became the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the new regiment, the 3rd Battalion remained as the 3rd, and the original 2nd Battalion became Weapons Company of the Regiment. The new regiment had as Commanding Officer, Colonel Alan Shapley (then Lt. Colonel), who had handled the 2nd Raider Regiment, Provisional, consisting of the 2nd and 3rd Raider Battalions during the Bougainville Operation.² Much of the original personnel still remained, though many officers and men had been sent home on rotation. Colonel Shapley had proceeded to build an esprit de corps and sense of unity into his new organization which had been formed from units each desperately proud of its own achievements. It was this new regiment which had taken the island of Emirau in the St. Matthias Group; this operation was bloodless, but a triumph of logistics and organization, since the plans for it had been formed and put into execution with astonishing speed.³ On 21 July the regiment landed below Agat on Guam as part of the 1st Provisional Brigade; the beaches were bloody—flanking guns and defences just inland piled up dead Marines; it stood off a terrific counterattack on the night of D-day, took

¹The 1st Marine Parachute Division had landed on Gavutu and had also fought at Bougainville. The 2nd Marine Parachute Battalion had made the very successful diversionary raid on Choiseul Island on 27 October 1943 to deflect the enemy's attention from the landing 1 November 1943 at Empress Augusta Bay. Its Commanding Officer in this raid, Lt. Colonel Victor H. Krulak, USMC, was now Operations Officer of the newly formed 6th Marine Division.

²The 1st Raider Regiment, Provisional, consisting of the 1st and 4th Raider Battalions, had fought at New Georgia under Lt. Colonel Harry B. Liversedge.

³Plans had been drawn originally for an attack by the 3rd Marine Division on Kavieng and preparatory bombings had already been made. The 4th Regiment was warned of the change of plans on 14 March 1944, loaded on 17 March 1944, and occupied Emirau 20 March 1944.

Mt. Alifan, and then, while the 77th Infantry Division guarded the mid-island passes and the high ground inland, marched to the neck of the Orote Peninsula and fought down the length of it, side by side with the 22nd Marines. The fighting was through dense jungle; there was no room to maneuver; the enemy was entrenched in concrete pill-boxes. Orote Peninsula was taken by 29 July and the last organized resistance of the Japanese was broken. Later the 4th Marines patrolled in the northern end. The 4th Marines or the component parts of the regiment had fought at Tulagi, Guadalcanal, Makin, New Georgia, Bougainville, Emirau, and Guam. They were seasoned troops.

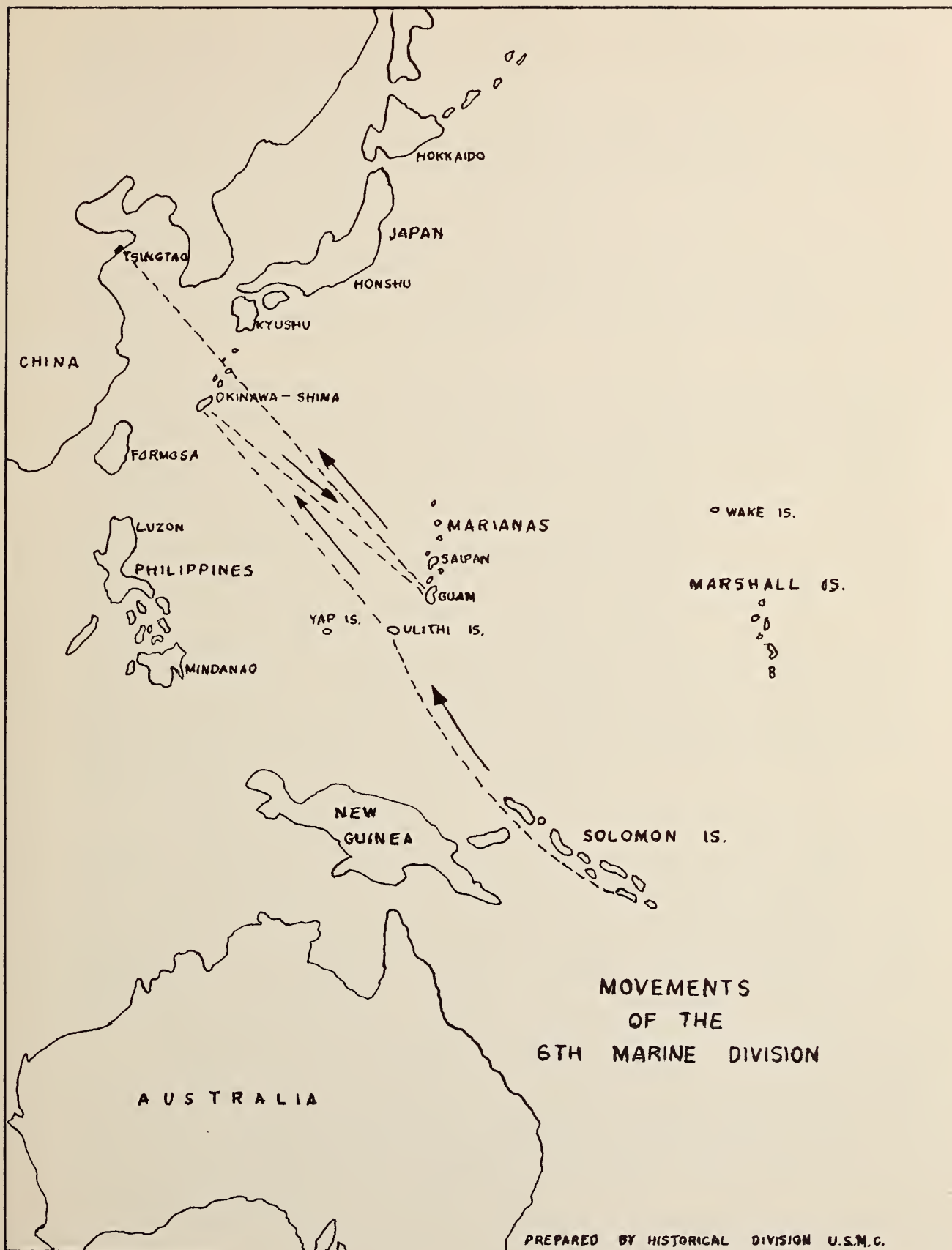
The 22nd Marines had been formed at San Diego under Colonel John T. Walker, now Brigadier General, U. S. Marine Corps. Fully one-third of the officers and men had seen service with the 6th Marines in Iceland. The 1st Battalion was activated in early June, 1942, and sailed from San Diego on 19 June for Upolu, British Samoa. The rest of the regiment was activated about the middle of June and sailed from San Diego on 19 July. All of the regiment, except the 3rd Battalion which went to Wallis Island, went to Upolu. One small outpost was sent to Savaii, the most distant of the group from Tutuila. Despite this separation, the regiment trained vigorously in their isolated outposts. In the late summer of '43 the whole regiment was brought together, given a final period of training, and sent to Hawaii. It acted as reserve during the Kwajalein Operation and from that atoll was sent directly with the 106th Infantry of the 27th Division to the Eniwetok Atoll. In a very smooth, beautifully timed series of maneuvers it took Engebi Island, Parry Island, and a large part of Eniwetok Island itself when it landed there to assist the 106 Infantry. Brigadier General Thomas E. Watson, as the Commanding Officer of Tactical Group One, had overall command. Colonel Merlin F. Schneider, later to become regimental commander, was the executive officer of the regiment under Colonel Walker. General Watson was later to command the 2nd Marine Division. After it completed the conquest of Eniwetok the regiment had relieved the 25th Marines on Kwajalein and for several months had been occupied in taking many small atolls in the Marshalls Group. In all they seized 29 islands, 21 vacant, 8 others defended by small numbers of Japanese. At Guadalcanal the regiment had been rehabilitated and had fought at Guam with the 4th Marines. They had sealed off the base of Orote Peninsula and then fought the length of it in a yard by yard advance with heavy casualties. The 22nd had probably as long and as severe a training in Samoa as any regiment in the Corps. The jungles of Samoa, the intense schooling, had produced a very capable regiment, solidly conscious of its own achievements.

The 29th Marines had been formed at Camp Lejeune under Colonel Victor Bleasdale, the famous training officer of the Corps. At Samoa in the early days of the war he had set up schools on Tutuila in which all men from the States received an intensive training. The officers that were graduated from this school are now spread wide through the Corps; all are proud of the training they received at Samoa. The two battalions were hand-picked; many of the men and officers were those who had returned from the Pacific and were now due to go out again; others came from sea duty or from outlying posts around the world where they had been sent. The regiment sailed for Guadalcanal with most of its reinforcing elements.

The 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, was formed very shortly before the Saipan operation, but it too was composed of seasoned men who in large part had fought at Guadalcanal and at Tarawa. On Saipan the assigned objective of the battalion was Mt. Tapotchau, 1,550 feet high, the commanding ground on the island. Under Lieutenant Colonel R. M. Tompkins,⁴ the battalion had taken the mountain in brilliant maneuvering and sharp battle. During the operation it suffered approximately 80% casualties.

The commanding officer of the 6th Division was Major General Lemuel C. Shepherd,

⁴The original commanding officer, Lt. Colonel Guy E. Tannyhill, had been wounded on D+2 and evacuated.



MAP NO. 1

Jr., U. S. Marine Corps. He had trained the 9th Marines, now part of the 3rd Marine Division, and was later Assistant Division Commander of the 1st Marine Division during the rainsoaked and desperate operation at Gloucester in New Britain. Later he had commanded the 1st Provisional Brigade at Guam.

The Assistant Division Commander was Brigadier General William T. Clement, U. S. Marine Corps, who had been in the Philippines at the outbreak of the war with Japan as a colonel on the staff of Admiral Thomas Hart. He left Corregidor on a submarine, later served in London, and was Commandant of the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico before returning to the Pacific.

In its training the new Division had certain great advantages: it was composed of seasoned troops and officers—this was true of the 29th Marines as well as of the other two regiments—large numbers of men and officers had been long in the military service; it had the experience of nearly four years of war to draw upon; on its staffs and in its ranks it had men experienced in the arts of war in the jungle, on atolls, and on larger land-masses.

Most important of these advantages, however, was this: the newness of the organization permitted changes in staff structure with a minimum of friction. The Marine Corps had been experimenting with staff structure since the early days of Guadalcanal; it still faced the same problems that have confronted generals and their staffs since war grew sufficiently complex to bar the commanding general from easy direction of combat through direct observation and with employment of a small group of aides. The staff, set up to obtain and interpret information for the commanding general and to carry the burden of new and onerous duties, not only stood between the general and his troops, but in the final analysis found itself also barred from immediate contact with the front lines and dependent on information funneled upward from lower echelons; the commanding general was thus twice removed from direct observation.

Thus in the increased complexity both of duties and of organization, the staffs and the general struggled to re-establish liaison with action; that is, to gain immediate contact with the front line troops. The usual liaison officers from battalion to regiment and from regiment to G-3 were only a partial answer; the information that they brought supplemented the information received by documents, radio and phone, but it was also secondary. In the 6th Marine Division certain decisive changes were made in staff structure to obtain first hand reports from the field:

1. The Reconnaissance Company of a Division is usually attached to G-2 and operates under the direction of the Assistant G-2; the company is the eyes of the G-2 and reports directly to it the results of reconnaissance of patrols, of duty on observation posts. For the Okinawa Operation, the Reconnaissance Company was removed from G-2 and put directly under G-3. A major was made commanding officer in place of the usual 1st lieutenant. The rank of the commanding officer made it simple to attach to the company, tanks, LCI's, or even another infantry company. The Reconnaissance Company then became a highly skilled body scouting out the terrain ahead of the advancing troops when the situation was fluid, or conducting cautious reconnaissance when the lines were static. It became also a formidable armed body operating under the general.

2. The removal of the Reconnaissance Company from G-2 left it without the means of obtaining direct observation and reports. To remedy this defect, G-2 set up two OP teams of eight men each, each commanded by a second lieutenant; these teams could become either collection teams when the troops were advancing rapidly; that is, they could collect documents, or they could set up OP's that would supplement one another and at the same time cover wide sections of the front when there was slow forward movement of the lines.

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas E. Williams also attached to his section for the Okinawa

Operation an Army counter-intelligence team for the express purpose of working with the civilians captured or surrendered who came into the camps to be set up by Military Government. This team could supply G-2 with information from a source not ordinarily tapped, and tremendously enlarge the areas of intelligence. The team was also to prove valuable in detecting Japanese soldiers who had hidden among the populace.

Colonel Williams had also established an effective method of getting intelligence back to the troops—perhaps the most difficult task that faces any G-2 section.

3. For his own purpose and for his immediate information the general was continuing an arrangement that had proved successful with the 1st Provisional Brigade at Guam. An aerial observer, a first lieutenant, flew missions for G-3—or the general—and reported his findings. He enabled the general to extend his range of direct observation, to see portions of the front that he could not ordinarily visit, and to gain knowledge in depth.

4. An assistant G-4 has two choices for the use of his transport battalion: (1) he can assign all his vehicles to the regiments and thus decentralize his authority. He will then act in a supervisory capacity, but will be unable to act in an emergency; that is, to throw an extra supply of vehicles into a breach; or, (2) he can keep his battalion of trucks in reserve and apportion them as the need arises. For the Okinawa Operation the G-4, Lieutenant Colonel August Larson and his assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Wayne H. Adams, adopted primarily the second system. A platoon of trucks was assigned to each regiment, enough for its normal needs. The rest of the motor transport battalion was kept in a central area near the Divisional Headquarters as a cushion of reserve power. Lower echelons desiring extra transportation telephoned into G-4 headquarters and stated their needs to a liaison officer who had full knowledge thus of the divisional needs and the number of vehicles available. This system not only kept the G-4 aware constantly of the needs of division; it also enabled him to keep always in reserve a supply of vehicles for an emergency. Moreover, the commanding officer of the motor transport battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Ernest H. Gould, could maintain control of his unit.

The training proceeded in 5 week periods, started with the basic essentials, worked upward through the essentials of squad, platoon, company and battalion movement, then graduated to regimental and divisional maneuvers, large scale problems in the field and CPX exercises for the staff. Finally there was the amphibious rehearsal, laborious, exhausting, and completely necessary. Such a rehearsal usually lasts for three days. On the first day the troops practice debarkation, but do not actually land; on the second day they land and establish a beachhead; on the third day they advance to the shore under naval gunfire and beneath the protection of an aerial assault. The 6th Marine Division employed five days for rehearsals: troops on the first day practiced debarkation and the deployment of landing craft; on the next two days they landed on the beaches and simulated deployment; then after a critique the division ran through a full dress rehearsal of assault troops and the landing of certain spotted items of supply. This rehearsal was not altogether satisfactory: the beaches were not adequate nor in any way a representation of the beaches they were to land on at Okinawa; there was no naval gunfire and only a few airplanes simulated the normal coverage for a landing operation.

Though at first when studies were made for the Okinawa operation the 6th Marine Division was presumed to be an interior unit, the final operation plan (1-45 Preferred) set the Division on the left flank of the Tenth Army. Its mission was to seize the vital Yontan Airfield, and to protect the left flank of the Army. To accomplish that mission it had to march from coast to coast over a mountain range and then swing north to seal



General Shepherd Surveys the Situation. Looking through glasses is Lt. Gen. S. B. Buckner, C. G. Tenth Army. On right is Brig. Gen. W. T. Clement, Assistant Division Commander.

the narrow neck of the isthmus that joined the northern and southern parts. This was Phase I of the operation. Phase II prescribed a march north on the isthmus and beyond.

The most delicate part of an amphibious operation is the ship-to-shore movement against determined opposition. The balance of the operation depends on its initial success. Troops must land and must drive far enough inland to establish a beachhead for supplies; they must be well enough organized to repel a counterattack on the first night—that means that supporting weapons must also be ashore. It must land supporting weapons, rations, water, and engineering equipment the first day and the rest of its tons of supplies—enough for 30 days—shortly thereafter. To have these precise operations successful under any circumstances requires the most careful planning and the most intensive briefing of troops. To carry them out against heavy opposition requires almost perfection of planning. Loads were skillfully understowed, the gear of the various organizations was loaded in the organization's ships and DUKW's and LVT's were preloaded before they went aboard. The Division prepared for its landing by the careful study of aerial photos, the coordination of all organizations, and by preliminary reconnaissance of the beaches.

The UDT teams made their usual reconnaissance at four days previous to L-day under the guns of destroyers. This time, however, they were assisted by a small reconnaissance group from the 6th Marine Division, six men under Second Lieutenant Charles H. Withey, U. S. Marine Corps, from the G-2 section. Lieutenant Withey had been executive officer of the Reconnaissance Company of the 1st Marine Division on Peleliu, and had had extensive schooling and experience in scouting and patrolling. The team that he had organized was intended to supplement the work of the UDT teams in two ways: (1) to report on the tactical significance of the discoveries of the UDT teams, and to some extent to instruct them on matters of tactical significance; (2) to report to the assault battalions on the beaches and on the **territory directly behind the beaches**. The theory on which they worked was that from offshore men from boats could observe territory inland more effectively than from a position actually on the beach. At three hundred yards from the beach, a man checked battalion beaches; at 1500 yards a man observed each regimental beach; at 3000 yards Lieutenant Withey made careful reconnaissance of the divisional beach. Information gathered according to a carefully prepared schedule⁵ was charted on a prepared beach outline. The men were rushed back to the oncoming fleet and shipped by breeches buoy aboard the vessels containing the assault battalions where they briefed the men on their discoveries.

The beaches were difficult.⁶ For the most part they were backed, just inland of the sand, by rocky escarpments into which the Japanese had set pill-boxes, blockhouses, and flanking guns. Egress from the beach was limited to a few roads, and those were narrow. Inland from the escarpments the land rose in a fairly steep gradient to a ridge protecting Yontan Airfield. The troops would presumably have to force their way to this ridge without too much support from auxiliary arms ashore and without cover. To the left of the beaches the Zampa Misake Peninsula stretched west for about 2000 yards. It could hold artillery or a counterattacking force. From the isthmus to the north, good roads led down to our left flank beach—ideal routes for tanks. Once the troops had mounted the long slope just inland from the beach, Yontan Airfield lay just before them, but its more formidable protective cover lay behind it, where a high range of hills ran north up the island's spine. Just to the north of the airfield was a high hill which commanded the whole area. It is reported (but not verified) that the Japanese commander

⁵See notes at end of chapter for a copy of this schedule.

⁶It is interesting but useless, of course, to speculate on what would have happened if these beaches had been defended by a force of divisional strength. The fortifications along the beach were technically the best that we met in the Pacific—and the beaches of the 6th Division nearly the worst.

had proclaimed that no one would be foolish to land on these beaches, once he had reconnoitered the ground and seen how it was defended both by the Japanese and by nature. (The Japanese commander had prepared positions for three battalions, and had protected assembly areas for a large mobile reserve. Nonetheless this was the spot selected by the Tenth Army for the landing of the Division, and the perfectly logical decision of General Ushijima was confounded. With too few men to defend the whole island,⁷ he had withdrawn all men from the Yontan Airfield save two hastily organized battalions. Another battalion he left on Motobu Peninsula; other troops, native organizations and small professional Army groups were apparently in movement between the two areas. The troops on Motobu were reinforced by members of a Navy unit; that is, from the little Naval Base at Unten and by Home Guards. The battalions on Yontan were largely air force personnel, and maintenance crews.)⁸

The Division was embarked at Guadalcanal on 14 March—the slower LST's had left two days before. At Ulithi the ships of the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions stayed, and here the assault troops were transferred to LST's. These more cumbersome vessels set sail ahead of the transports. The Division had alleviated one discomfort of the troops crowded aboard these slower vessels. The water purification units taken along for use on the island had been partially distributed, one to each LST, and put to work so that the troops heretofore dependent on the limited amount of water in the vessel's tanks could now make free use of the showers.

The Division was loaded in 13 APA's, 24 LST's, 10 LSM's and one LSP. The ships carried 23,832 men and 71,182 tons of supplies.⁹ It was estimated that to unload this gear would require at least 10 days. It took eight. There had now been evolved a routine procedure for handling the unloading. It was standard Operating Procedure for the Landing Vehicles, Tracked to be carried in LST's and to slip from their lowered ramps into the water. The process worked satisfactorily. Tanks were still a problem. In LCT's they could be brought to the reef and then run in from there with a man to guide them or an amtrac; this method was frequently unsatisfactory if the reef was rough or full of potholes. Or they could be debarked directly from the new LSM's, onto the reefs. One company of the Tank Battalion now had flotation devices that could be removed upon the land, and was going to move directly in from deep water.

The fleet left Ulithi on 27 March 1945 and went slowly north in heavy rains and chilly weather that made the men look slightly apprehensive, but as the ships neared Okinawa the skies cleared and L-day was beautiful with a slight breeze and a bright sun.

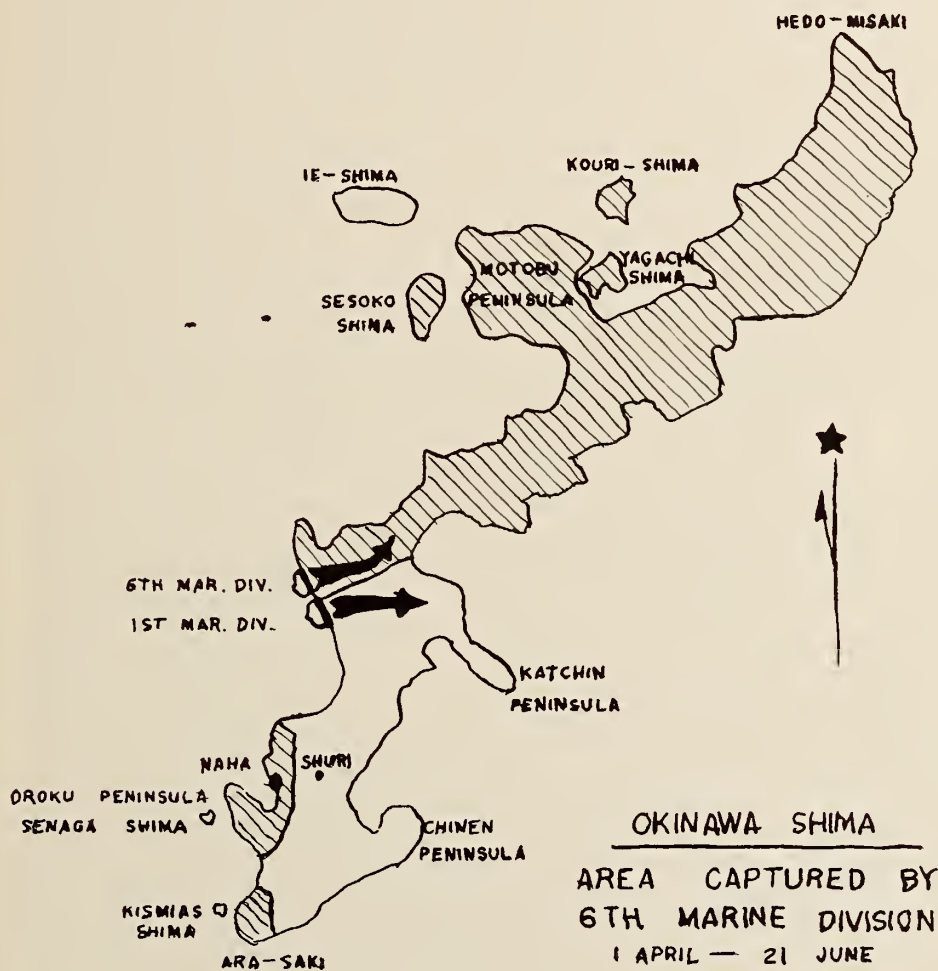
At early dawn the bombardment commenced and the whole outline of the island disappeared under a fog of dust, smoke, and explosives. The ships took under fire their prescribed areas; as the fire lifted the planes came over, and then the little LCI's rushed in with their rocket barrages. Finally the Armored LVT's advanced before the first waves. The tide was high and the uneven coral shelf offered no obstacle at that time.

The lack of fire that the men met on the beach was not at first a relief but a source of apprehension; it was eerie and ominous; men felt that possibly some tremendous blow was being withheld, a blow more terrible than any they had known. The spirit of the

⁷The removal of the 9th Division to Formosa in November 1945 as reinforcements for the Philippines had made impossible a defense of even the populated southern half of the island with its strategic airfields. (See Colonel Yahara's report.)

⁸By L plus 1, the Divisional 00B officer, 1st Lt. Spencer V. Silverthorne, had established by questioning civilians and homeguards that the two battalions left on Yontan Airfield had been the 44th and 50th Air Field Battalions that were composed of maintenance crews, and that they had fled to the hills, most of the troops heading south, though a few had straggled to the north. Later information disclosed that there had also been five AA units which had withdrawn to the south. Though the air field units had had some infantry training, they were poorly armed and indifferently good troops.

⁹Figures are taken from the loading charts of the Divisional Transport Quartermaster.



PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

troops rose, however, as they moved up the ridge without meeting fire. Along the crest were the ancient tombs on which they had been briefed and here they reorganized. On the right the 4th Marines moved cautiously but rapidly across the airfield, and on the left the 22nd Marines worked into rough coral country and deserted villages. Immediately the news reached the ship, the 29th Marines, Corps Reserve, were thrown ashore, and the Division Command Post was established in a previously marked position on the shore in a narrow valley lined with tombs. The Reconnaissance Company pushed one thousand yards out on the left flank, up a railroad track and out the Zampa Misake Peninsula but were fired at only twice. That night the lines were established on the L-3 line. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 29th Marines held a secondary line in between the two assault regiments, and the 1st Battalion, 29th, held the left flank stretching back to the beach. The whole 29th regiment had at first been designated as III Corps Reserve, but in the rapidly moving situation, it had been released to the 6th Division at 1300 and could now protect the tremendously elongated flank that faced the enemy. Behind the 22nd Marines and the 29th stretched a line of artillery, and at the very peak of the refused left flank, the Reconnaissance Company had dug in.

Anticipating its heaviest opposition before Yontan Airfield, the 6th Division had held the 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines (minus Easy Company) in reserve, planning to use it for forwarding the attack on the vital field even though its use there to some extent weakened the defensive possibilities of the left flank. Though on this first day there was little opposition, the use of the battalion on the right flank proved wise. The 1st Marine Division drifted slightly right during the day, the front of the 4th Marines widened in its attempts to keep contact. By 1500 the 2nd Battalion reverted to regimental control and was committed on the left flank of the regiment.

The night proved uneventful. Several rounds of artillery fell into the 4th Marines' lines, but that was all. Planes came down from Japan, however, and the beachhead was illuminated at intervals by the long streams of tracer fires from the grouped ships. The only danger that most of the troops suffered was that from falling flak.

During the first day, large numbers of civilians had begun to come into our lines, and the Division was already setting up the first of a series of camps for them.¹⁰ From them and from other sources, the Intelligence section of the Division was beginning to gain a complete picture of the situation; this knowledge caused not a change in the basic plans of the Division but an acceleration of them. Supplies came in readily only at high tide when the extremely uneven coral shelf was covered. The rapid movement of the regiments necessitated not only the speeding up of supplies but the revision of priorities: certain machinery, such as bulldozers, would be needed long before it had been anticipated that they could be used. The needs of transportation were urgent. Instead of a limited beachhead with short runs from beach to the front lines, there was already in existence a perimeter which was to stretch out farther and farther each day in tremendous leaps. Furthermore the lack of opposition had brought up another question of control. The Division Headquarters had to displace forward rapidly to control its regiments and to watch the situation. As it displaced forward first, to just west of the Yontan Ridge on the second day and then up on the neck of the isthmus, it lost contact with the rear areas, and plans had to be made with the Corps to take over contacts with the beach, and to set up defensive installations.¹¹ As the roads lengthened behind the advance, and more and more traffic crowded them, the MP Battalion of the Corps had to be used to supplement the inadequately mounted MP's of the Division. These changes began almost immediately; they continued smoothly as the advance continued.

¹⁰See notes at end of chapter.

¹¹See III Amphibious Corps Order 2-45. A discussion of Corps functions is in the appendix.

On the second day, the situation was still fluid; the Division Headquarters was beginning to formulate the picture of what lay ahead of it, but the details were by no means clear. It was important, however, to keep up the forward momentum. Two things were necessary to do this: (1) The steady supply of food, water, and ammunition to the front line troops. (2) Unremitting probing of the front to determine what the enemy was going to do and where he was. To the main front then, the troops continued their advance in the foothills of the Yontan Ridge; on the left 1/29 patrolled the Zampa Misake Peninsula and removed the threat of action from that quarter.

This fluid situation was ideal for reconnaissance, and the Division had an ideal instrument for this purpose—a Reconnaissance Company of 140 men under Major Anthony Walker, U. S. Marine Corps. On L plus 1 they crossed the neck of the peninsula and took the small town of Nagahamma and reported on the suitability of its beach area for the amphibious unloading of supplies; on L plus 2 they were to travel, mounted on tanks, across the base of the isthmus to see what opposition would meet the troops. Their report cleared the way for the rapid movement of the battalions.

Behind the lines the two battalions of the 29th, the 2nd and 3rd, were either occupied with searching out the caves, many of them filled with civilians, or were countermarching to protect Yontan Airfield from a threatened air attack.

As the 4th Marines advanced, they began a gradual side slip to rectify the boundaries of both the 1st Division and the 6th, and entered upon terrain that was to prove wearisomely familiar—and dangerous during the rest of the operation.

Okinawa is an old island as far as civilization goes. People have tilled its soil for long hundreds of years and cut its forests. Consequently there are trails running along all the ridges; all valleys of any size are ribbed with a series of small dams to form rice paddies for the small streams that trickle down them; hills that are not too steep have been cut into terraces. Movement of men up the ridges or along them is always possible because of the trails—but frequently dangerous because these trails are also known to the enemy and allow him rapid access to any threatened spot. This mountainous landscape, though perhaps young geologically, has been greatly worn by erosion, possibly from the indiscriminate tillage and the wasteful cutting of timber. The soil has been washed from the coral substratum, and from the sides of the central mountain range long finger ridges project into the valleys, with narrow defiles between them. These ridges are razor-backed, usually wide enough for only one man to travel on.

In setting up their defences either for the permanent protection of an area, or for delaying action, the Japanese had taken full advantage of the terrain. Around the walls of a defile they had dug a series of caves; on the ridges above them they could place riflemen to command the trails. If a patrol or a platoon entered the defile, it was fired on from caves on both sides of the ravine; if it climbed up the ridges it was sniped at both from above and below, and yet could not answer effectively the fire from the caves. Love Company, 3/4 ran into such a region of ridges and caves on noon of L plus 1. A platoon of the company, advancing cautiously up a valley soft with rice paddies, was brought under heavy fire from caves, and was unable either to advance, or to withdraw its casualties. Amongst others the Company Commander, Captain Nelson C. Dale, Jr., was wounded. A platoon of M7's was wheeled into position to fire over the heads of the trapped men, but could not break them free. The regiment handled the situation by sending Item Company around the ridges and to the top of the draw. Here they engaged in a fire fight with the enemy deployed to cover the ridges, took them in the rear and either drove them over the cliffs or killed them. Meanwhile the other two platoons at the mouth of the draw covered the platoon in the valley amidst the rice paddies. Finally one platoon under the executive officer, 1st Lieutenant Marvin D. Perskie, assaulted and cleaned out the caves. About 250 Japanese were killed. Similar positions were to

be met again and again; to take them infantry had to depend only on their organic weapons and their own possibilities of maneuver. It is interesting to note that the battles and skirmishes of this northern phase of the operation were battles of maneuver with companies and battalions evolving their own procedures of movement. No entirely adequate method of dealing with these situations was ever devised.¹²

By the night of L plus 1, the lines were generally along the foothills of the Yontan Ridge, the Division Headquarters was already displacing forward from the beach, the threat to the left flank was effectively disposed of. The troops still in Corps Reserve were fresh and unused.

All day long the 6th Engineer Battalion and the 58th Sea Bees attached to the Division had been working on the Yontan Airfield. It was already suitable for the little observation planes, and by night one F6F had made a forced landing on it. Shortly after the completion of this task the Sea Bees were released to the III Amphibious Corps to work on the lines of supply that it was planning for the advancing divisions.

On L plus 2, the 22nd and the 4th Marines advanced over the mid-island mountain slope and well into the foothills on the other side. The distance covered was about 7000 yards. On the left, the 22nd Marines ran into rough wild country and Weasels had to carry their supplies to them. On the right, the battalions of the 4th Marines climbed rocky slopes through thick brush and then plunged on in a region of sharp ridges and deep wooded gullies. They had left their packs behind them. As they left the ridge top they lost physical contact with the regiment, and supplies had to be run far down into the 1st Division's area and up the coast to them by nightfall. Though it was spring, the heat of the sun was tremendous. Two flame-thrower men carrying their huge burdens of nearly 70 pounds were overcome.

In the gullies there were a few scattered Japanese probably left from the battalion that had been scattered near the airfield. The patrols searched the gullies with men covering them from the ridges. At dusk they came out into a region of bare hills. They carried their supplies 800 yards from the nearest roads and that night shivered in the wind without their packs.

By L plus 3, the Division had completed its part of the first phase of the operation; it had a line across the base of the isthmus from Nakadomari to Ishikawa. The assault regiments came down out of the foothills and swinging slightly to the northeast advanced toward the isthmus. The land was rolling and grassy, with only a few trees near dwellings or on ridges. The landscape was desolate; all the houses were deserted; the fields were vacant. Now and again there was a spattering of fire from the heads of columns as they ran into little scattered groups of Japanese soldiers, still presumably from the battalion that had been guarding the airfield. The general movement of these soldiers seemed to be north; they were apparently trying to make contact with the Udo Force on the Motobu Peninsula. In any case, their direction of drift indicated that there was organized resistance ahead and an enemy plan for the delay if not the destruction of our troops. By noon, the first of the columns was coming down off the high coral cliffs that looked down on the isthmus, and by early afternoon, the three battalions of the 4th were on the long curving beach that fronted the sea at Ishikawa. The men were footsore and very weary, but their spirits were high.

Here along this line the forces of the Division gathered. The tanks came up both the west and east coast and went into an assembly area close behind the lines. The Division Command Post was making plans to move into the base of the isthmus, and Corps was organizing dumps and bulldozing wide roads toward the isthmus. The Engineer Battalion was especially active: with its limited transportation it was shuttling forward its mechanical equipment for the next push down the island.

¹²(See Appendix).

Phase II as originally envisioned had given the 6th Division the task of advancing north along the island to provide a base for artillery fire on Motobu. It was the 2nd Marine Division's task to make the landing. With the 2nd Division landed, the 6th Marine Division was to seal off the base of the peninsula and make preparations to take the rest of the island by a series of amphibious landings, possibly of regimental size. This plan was now revised. The taking of the northern part of the island was entirely in the 6th Marine Division's hands. Until 9 April the 2nd Marine Division was afloat in the vicinity of Okinawa still in Tenth Army reserve. On 9 April it was returned to Saipan and on 14 April was attached to III Amphibious Corps as reserve. Unless unexpected enemy opposition was met, the advance as far as the Motobu Peninsula was to be a logistic problem. From the isthmus to the base of the peninsula there were two narrow coastal roads, frequently winding round high cliffs and built out over a seawall; these roads could not be widened easily. Moreover, aerial reconnaissance had shown that many bridges were down. Between these roads and thrusting upward to the very end of the island was a mountain range, very rugged, with steep worn slopes. Farther north they were wooded; in the south the ridges were covered with low brush or were grassy. At long intervals, roads crossed from side to side of the island over passes. The particular problem of the division was to move troops, vehicles, supplies, auxiliary arms, such as tanks and artillery over these one way roads, to keep effective security, and to keep up the momentum already established that was moving the division ahead at the rate of 7000 yards a day. There was a variety of reasons why this momentum should be watched and kept:

1. To meet the enemy and destroy him—the classical reason, the basic purpose of the operation. The sooner we met the enemy, the less chance he would have to organize his own forces or to destroy or interdict the roads of approach.

2. To seize and hold all available ports along the coast. There was already the threat of counterlandings by the Japanese either by small raiding units, especially trained for the work or by larger occupying forces. Since Okinawa was only 350 miles from Japan itself, barges could make the voyage easily. The G-2 section was aware both of the existence of the trained counter-landing forces and of the plans for reinforcing the northern garrison.

3. To seal off and contain the organized forces that were known to be on Motobu Peninsula. G-2 in these days and the days following was to gain more explicit information on the force on Motobu under Colonel Udo. It had earlier learned of his presence on the island and was soon to locate his forces.

4. To occupy strategic areas on the island and from them by active patrolling to break up attempts at organized guerrilla warfare. The G-2 was aware that the auxiliary forces of Colonel Udo were being used to strengthen his command but that he was also directing the organization of Okinawan units for guerrilla warfare. These units would be both in uniform and in civilian dress.

5. To hold and develop the harbor at Nago as the base for further operations. Once this harbor had been seized the division could be supplied quickly by water, and the long road haul up the island could be secured.

From various intelligence sources the G-2 section had secured the knowledge that there was little opposition immediately in front of our lines.¹³ The G-3 section, under

¹³Colonel Williams had sent two civilians, passed by the counter-intelligence team, up both roads with orders to report any enemy action to him. The families of these civilians remained in the Civil Affairs camp. The information obtained was correct.

Lieutenant Colonel Victor H. Krulak, set up the plans for the advance. The 22nd Regiment was to push down the island in rapid reconnaissance; on the coast it would proceed with tank-infantry teams, making short inland patrols. In the centre of the line, 1/22 would proceed more slowly, patrolling the trails and intercepting any stragglers. When the 22nd Marines reached a line through Atsutabarū—Kin, it would go into an assembly area and continue patrolling. Meanwhile, behind the regiment, the engineers could clear roads, repair bridges, and move forward gear. Then on the east coast the three battalions of the 4th could move through the lines of the 22nd without hindrance, and on the west coast the battalions of the 29th could go forward confidently. The 22nd Marines moved forward without meeting any opposition from the enemy. They killed a few stragglers. On the line Atsutabarū-Kin where the island widened, 1/29 was hastily marched up to extend the line to the coast. That night there was a flurry of a minor counterattack as some 30 or 40 Japanese blundered into the lines. A naval officer was captured and subsequently proved of considerable intelligence value.

Both regiments made this first advance with great rapidity. It was obvious that to the 29th Marines would fall the task of conquering Motobu Peninsula and from the moment they went on in advance of the 22nd, Colonel Bleasdale drove the long columns of his battalions forward at top speed. Two long and crowded lines of foot troops marched along either side of the road and vehicles nosed down through the crowd in the middle.¹⁴ LVT's and LST's waited on the passing columns to secure likely inlets and bays where they could unload. The Division Command Post was now on the high hills at the base of the isthmus, and the Reconnaissance Company was patrolling the area around it for any movement of troops.

By L plus 5 the 29th Marines had reached Chuda and thrown a line across the island on the road that crossed it there; the 4th Marines were still delayed by blown bridges. On the west coast the destruction of the bridges was unskillful: frequently only a span of the bridge had been dropped or cracked. The engineers cut hasty by-passes for the tanks and trucks where they could and later repaired the broken spans. On the east coast destruction had been much more effective; here the engineers had to set in a 120 foot bridge. Aerial reconnaissance brought news of enemy activity along the roads and hills of Motobu Peninsula.

On the next day the Reconnaissance Company with tanks led the advance of the 29th into Nago, securing the route for their advance, and then swung across the base of the Peninsula to Taira;¹⁵ the 3rd battalion of the 29th started out the coast road toward Awa. Here for the first time there was evidence that our troops were striking not stragglers but outposts of some defensive force. The Reconnaissance Company had a few small fire fights and 3/29 received some organized rifle fire. We had reached Motobu; Nago had become the centre of our activities—the Division Command Post was moving there from its position near Chuda.

The Reconnaissance Company was now employed in the first patrolling into Motobu. They started on L plus 6 to follow the road around the southern and western coasts. Broken bridges forced them to leave the tanks behind and they went on afoot. They ran into immediate evidence of the enemy. Mines were planted frequently, though not too expertly, bridges were blown, and where the road circled out around cliffs deep

¹⁴As the columns approached Nago, the Reconnaissance Company was detailed to precede them, sending out patrols over the high hills that came down nearly to the coast road. The marching men pressed on through the company, however. To the left the black forested mass of Motobu Peninsula loomed against the sky, its curved coastline stretching to the south. Men glanced at it uneasily and along the crowded columns, wondering what a few well-directed shots from a field piece would do. The guns were there and the columns must have been under easy observation—but nothing happened.

¹⁵The Reconnaissance Company had two tanks loaded with fireteams preceding its advance. When the road dipped across a valley, the tanks covered the opposite ridge while scouts went ahead. This system of advance was fast and effective. It was never tried, however, against heavy opposition.

breaches had been made that still showed the marks of the shovel. Patrols of the company pushed up into the narrow valleys and along the trails but found nothing save deserted houses. Just off the coast and in touch with Major Walker by radio a little fleet of five LCI's moved slowly along, and before the company passed by some of the frowning cliffs that fronted on the road took them under fire with their 40's and their 20's. The company went on cautiously till it had rounded the southwestern corner and had drawn up abreast of the silent island of Sesoki-Shima. They explored the deserted town of Suga and then began the march back. The company returned without having a shot fired at it, however, to meet the 3/29 just pressing on down the road beyond Nago and already in a slight fire fight. (Later on a prisoner of war said that the company was under complete observation at all times but that the commanding officer of the defence had correctly estimated their errand and had let them pass unscathed waiting for a more formidable quarry).

By this time plans for the conquest of the peninsula were ready to be put in operation. Two battalions were to fix the position of the enemy. The 3rd Battalion, 29th Marines, was to circle the southern and western coasts to Toguchi, where there was a small harbor; the 2nd Battalion, 29th Marines, was to march north on the coast road that led to the northwest tip. Originally the 1st Battalion of the same regiment was to assemble in reserve near the midpoint of the base ready to be thrown into action when demanded. This last did not happen; events moved so fast that this last battalion moved directly from below Nago to the centre of the peninsula where it had its own peculiar troubles.

Motobu Peninsula was to a large extent unknown territory at this time. Large portions of the interior were clouded over when the photographs were taken; later photographs failed to disclose important trails hidden under the trees; and it was only after a Japanese map had been captured that the complete road network was made clear.

The peninsula is a country in itself, inhabited by a race of mountain farmers who founded their gardens on impossible slopes, and made their rice paddies with great labor. The villages were for the most part poorer than those farther south and usually consisted of small groups of thatched houses. Water was scarce except in the valleys. The peninsula juts out to the west of Okinawa something like a slightly crooked thumb, but only a little longer than it is wide. Midway of the peninsula, running almost east and west, a stream bisects the two ranges of hills and comes on down past Manna and to the sea near Toguchi. It broadens here to make a small harbor. On the northern side of the peninsula, about two-thirds of the way to the tip, a small group of islands form a protecting harbor. Here was a midget submarine base, a torpedo station, and a naval operation base for suicide boats. Though the region seems primarily to be upthrust coral ridges, the concentric hills give the whole peninsula a resemblance to a giant extinct crater. Around the whole end and back toward the island these hills run in a series of ridges that are topped inland by two high twisted masses of rock to the south of the Manna road. To the north the ridges are lower and rise to a line of ridges farther back from the coast. Between these northern ridges and the coast there is considerable rolling land and a few fairly prosperous villages. The only break in the wall to the west is at Toguchi Harbor; to the east the mouth of the horseshoe is protected by lower wooded hills above the flat rice paddies that lie west of Nago. Itomi, the one town of consequence in the eastern portion of the peninsula, lies in these hills, on a road which follows the stream toward Manna. Probably the town had readier communication with Manna than with Nago which was reached by a long curving road that ran through narrow defiles. The lower ridges were wooded, principally with a kind of pine—in some parts extensive lumbering was going on. The higher mountains were rocky or covered with grass or a few stunted trees.

The peninsula is about ten miles long, and nearly eight miles wide—as large, that



PLACE NAMES OF NORTHERN OKINAWA

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 3

cm

is, as Saipan; it could easily contain a division of Japanese troops. The country is more rugged than Saipan; if properly defended it could have been held for a long time, and taken only at great cost.

It was clear later on that the Japanese commander had deliberately chosen the two higher mountain masses, both about 1400 feet high, that lay to the south of the Itomi road for his principal defensive area. The northern and eastern sides were too flat to be adequately defended, and the naval base was very vulnerable from the sea. From these heights he could control the approaches to Toguchi with field artillery and naval guns;¹⁶ he could interdict the road running to Itomi; he could keep under his observation any movements of troops to the north of him, and either intercept patrols or halt attacking forces by long range fire from many 20 and 25mm AA guns converted to ground use. This was the final picture after the conquest.

At this time knowledge of the enemy was incomplete. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas E. Williams, Chief of the G-2 Section, had employed unusual and efficient means of gaining information, however, and by now had nearly completed identification of the units on the peninsula.

The peninsula had been assigned to one regiment for possible conquest, then. Just to the north of the base of the peninsula the 22nd Marines were assembled, conducting long patrols north and into the interior; on the east coast the 4th Marines were in assembly areas also probing north and toward the inner mountain ranges. These two regiments could prevent any movement north or south, and discover or repel any landings; they were also in position to act as mobile reserve if they were needed.

Nago was now the nerve centre of the Division: to its harbor LST's were bringing supplies, and the long road haul from the landing beaches had been largely abandoned. The 6th Engineer Battalion had gradually been allowed to release to Corps the control of roads, first south of Chuda, and then south of Nago; it was assembling bridging material at Nago; luckily it had brought into combat more bridging material than any other division had used before, and it had a number of the Army Bailey Bridges, which the Marine Corps was using for the first time. The progress down the peninsula depended on the prompt and unwearying activity of the Engineers.

The problem of transportation was still acute, however. Vehicles for the division had been allotted on the assumption that for a long period of time we would have only a ten mile beachhead. These vehicles when loaded aboard ship, had been given priority for unloading on the assumption that for the first 15 days the division would be near the beach. The Division Shore Party, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel S. R. Shaw had done a phenomenal job of unloading, of working with such speed that all ships were unloaded within eight days; the difficulties of priorities had been overcome, but our rapid forward advance had strained every resource. Supplies and gear had been kept rolling, however, under the supervision of Lieutenant Colonel August Larson and Lieutenant Colonel Wayne H. Adams.

Both battalions, as they struck out along the southern and western, and the northern and eastern coasts, ran into immediate problems of supply. The bridge just west of Nago was out; beyond that were mines and near Awa the concrete span over a deep rocky gorge had been blown. It was here that the Engineer Battalion laid its first Bailey bridge. On the north coast 2/29 forded a tidal stream over which a bridge had been blown, and was supplied by amtracs until the engineers had built a by-pass, some 500 yards of road and a new bridge.

The 2nd Battalion proceeded steadily north with only scattering opposition to its

¹⁶These naval guns were also designed to interdict the airfields on Ie Shima. If the attack on Ie Shima by the 77th Infantry Division had not coincided with the 6th Marine Division's attack on Colonel Udo's forces, the guns might have seen effective use.

patrols in the hills. In the villages there were occasional Japanese soldiers—or members of the home guard who fired or sniped, but there was nothing that looked like outposts of a larger force or of a Main Line of Resistance.

In the south, 3/29 was having a different experience. On 7 April as the battalion pushed out along the coast road it crossed the only two roads that led up through passes to the interior of the peninsula: one leading up through Yamanawabara joined the Itomi road; the other farther to the west followed a stream bed to and through Fujibaru. Lieutenant Colonel E. A. Wright sent two companies, George and How, up these roads. Captain Thomas J. Blanchet led George Company; Captain William P. Tomasello, How Company.¹⁷ Both companies proceeded up through densely wooded country till they reached the high interior hills where they were fired on by what were apparently small patrols. George Company captured and destroyed a 20mm gun and How Company lost one killed and two wounded: the first casualties of the operation for 3/29. It was apparent that the two companies had struck some sort of defensive core, and that the Japanese were prepared to defend the interior. It was on the basis of this report that 1/29 was to be sent the next day straight on to Itomi to control or contain that resistance.

On 9 April the battalion moved out along the beach road toward Awa and as it moved received some fire from riflemen in the hills; but the fire was long range and not damaging. It was obvious however, that the column was under observation. That night the battalion set up beyond the town of Awa with its three companies flung out in a perimeter toward the high hills that rose abruptly inland and the Battalion Command Post in amongst some small stone tombs on the little terrace above the sea. At 1900 or just about dusk the first heavy shell plunged into the sea just beyond the terrace and then for fifteen of twenty minutes two heavy guns from the ridges above poured what must have been boresighted shots into the CP itself and then, as abruptly as they had begun, ceased. There were sixteen casualties in headquarters but none in the companies. The Colonel called down fire from two battalions of the 15th Marines to the west of Nago during the night and there was no more firing. In the morning the long columns of the companies formed along the beach road without interference and continued the march to Toguchi. Either the guns had been silenced or Colonel Udo did not wish to disclose their position—or the firing could have been part of a calculated attempt to intimidate our troops in approved guerrilla fashion.

On 10 April Lieutenant Colonel E. A. Wright led 3/29 to their objective, the town of Toguchi. They arrived at four o'clock in the afternoon. Heavy rain was falling as they set up for the night on the hills above the ruined town. The usual security patrols were sent out to the hills nearby, and Captain W. E. Jorgensen led Item Company out along the road to Manna to investigate that route of approach. He crossed the stream and pressed on past several roads entering the valley, posting the usual guards at each entrance, and his company was hit as it entered the defile from which the road emerged. The fire was from mortars and machine guns at long range, from high above the company. In the rain, and low visibility there was no way of determining accurately the source of the fire or replying to it. Captain Jorgensen withdrew his company to the perimeter.

When on 8 April 3/29 had first met resistance on its way inland, 1/29 under Lieutenant Colonel Jean W. Moreau had been sent from Yofuke, where it was bivouacked, straight on past Nago, through the area in which How Company had been fired upon to Itomi which it reached on 9 April; the two battalions were separated only by the Manna-

¹⁷Before the reorganization of divisions in the spring of 1944, each battalion had four companies: three rifle companies and a weapons company. When the weapons company was abolished the other companies preserved their original alphabetical designations. Thus the three battalions of a regiment would have companies lettered A,B,C,(D); E,F,G,(H); I,K,L,(M). When the 29th Marines was being formed, however, the companies were lettered straight through: A,B,C; D,E,F; G,H,I. The difference in designation can cause confusion.

Itomi road. This road could not be used by tanks at either of the two ends, however; bridges were blown, and there were great breaches in the road and felled trees across it. As it approached Itomi, the point of the battalion had run into an ambush of two machine guns firing from burned houses across a little stream. A platoon had taken each gun from the flank, and the battalion had moved on. Two men had been wounded.

The next day the two battalions, 3/29 and 1/29, made a bold attempt to open the road between them; if this road could be opened and the ground on either side of it seized it would pocket the enemy to the south and make his final destruction more simple. Two companies went out from 3/29—George and How, and two from 1/29—Able and Baker accompanied by Battalion Headquarters.

George and How Companies, knowing the experience of Item Company the day before, proceeded cautiously, sending out deep flank patrols, but as they passed a curve in the road, machine guns opened on them and momentarily split the companies into three sections. The casualties were not serious, but for a time the men could not move. Then from How Company in the rear Captain William P. Tomasello sent up a platoon with two machine guns to a hill commanding the south side of the road. This platoon drew the fire of the enemy guns, but it protected the withdrawal of the advanced platoons. Again it was a question of being unable to reply to the fire received—or to reply effectively. Moreover, our artillery was so placed that it was firing toward us over a mask of hills; it could not be effectively used in a situation like the one in which the two companies found themselves.

To remedy this defect of the artillery, fire power was supplied in a different fashion. The 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion had been trained to use its guns in battery fire. Four of these weapons were now brought around to Toguchi and put under the control of the Artillery Forward Observers with the battalion. Later they were to provide prompt and satisfactory coverage.

To the east 1/29 had proceeded without incident until it was close to Manna and could nearly see the ocean. Then machine guns and mortars from the heights opened on them and split the column of troops as they had done to the companies of 3/29. It was then late in the afternoon; the 81mm platoon had already fired most of its ammunition without appreciable effect since good observation was impossible. The two companies began a withdrawal, Baker Company in the lead. As the road they were on approached Itomi, it passed out of the woods and across an open draw. A little road came down this draw. As the battalion approached the bridge, it came under fire again, this time from machine guns and rifles. Behind the shelter of some fallen trees Captain Lyle E. Specht of Baker Company set up his machine guns, and Charlie Company gave overhead fire. Baker Company and two platoons of Able Company got past to safe ground with only two or three men slightly injured. The first platoon of Able Company acting as rear guard and separated from the rest of the company had marched off the road to a protected ridge where it spent the night and came safely in to the Battalion Command Post in the morning.

At this point Division could draw a great red oval on the map of the peninsula and fairly accurately set up the outermost limits of enemy resistance; it was not at all clear, however, just where the focal points of that resistance were located. So far Colonel Udo had shown a very skillful defense. It was passive in that he did not seek to send his men out of a circumscribed area; it was cautious since he attacked only when he had the overwhelming advantage of place and time; that is, he attacked only late in the afternoon when he was sure that no expedition could be sent deep into the hills after him; he attacked normally only with fire and husbanded his men carefully. It was already apparent that he intended not to destroy but to delay our forces, to keep alive a center for guerrilla warfare, possibly to keep involved a large portion of our forces so that they could not

be sent south. When the region was conquered, it was discovered how he had resisted so successfully for a short period. Colonel Udo had his Command center on Mt. Yae-take in a well-protected ravine; it contained amongst other things an exceedingly complete telephone exchange. He had outposts equipped with radio and telephones at convenient observation posts throughout his area—the Command Post of 1/29 was, for example, under continual observation. Later on a radio station was discovered a bare five hundred yards from the CP.

Through the telephone exchange the colonel could receive his reports and send out his orders directing attacks and coordinating them. Moreover, the Japanese were much better equipped for mountain warfare at that time than were we. They knew the trails thoroughly and they had an adequate means of quick transportation, horses. Later on in secret defiles little paddocks and corrals were discovered completely equipped even with veterinary supplies. Finally Colonel Udo had an extraordinary number of automatic weapons: amongst the most effective the 25mm naval guns on pedestal mounts that were set in good emplacements in the hill masses. With mortars, 13.2's that were easily carried, fixed 25mm guns, and field artillery—at least a battery—and all the advantages of terrain, the colonel had at least a logical reason to believe that he could continue to exist, not placidly but probably successfully for an indefinite period.

The Special Action Report of III Amphibious Corps mentions a Japanese attack on a water point on 23 April and remarks that this attack was the first evidence of guerrilla warfare. Properly studied, however, Colonel Udo's appears to be a highly skillful form of guerrilla defence. In his famous article in the **Encyclopedia Britannica**, T. E. Lawrence of Arabian fame had laid down certain principles for successful guerrilla warfare drawn from his experience in the Arabian revolt:

1. That to be successful, the guerrilla must avoid the decisive battle. He is inferior to the enemy in numbers; he cannot defend a line or even a strong-point.
2. That the guerrilla must attack the communication lines of the enemy and injure him by small attacks wherever possible.
3. That these attacks should be severe enough to keep the enemy involved; but that they should not be serious enough to make him move large amounts of troops against him.

Lawrence further points out that to wage successful guerrilla warfare the guerrilla must have space into which he can retreat beyond the reach of the enemy and that he must have great mobility so that his attacks can be widely separated.

Colonel Udo had no space to which he could retreat; that fact was probably his downfall. It is obvious, however, that he had attempted to use the mountain masses for a secure centre in the belief that the heavy woods and precipitous hills would prevent the use of organized troops against him.

On 12 April the Division ordered the nine companies of the 29th Marines out on a series of patrols which was to cover much of the peninsula. From 3/29 George Company was to march north to make contact with Fox/29 on the north coast. How Company was to march east along the Manna road to meet Able Company of the 1st Battalion. Item Company was to go directly up in the hills to the southeast where much of the fire had been coming from. At the other end of the Manna road, 2/29, less Fox Company, sent its two companies, Dog and Easy, high onto the ridges to the northwest; the area into which they were going was simply a white space on the map; there were no roads. The companies waited in groups on the Itomi road; presently three phosphorus shells arched high overhead and fell near the summit of the barren rocky ridges. Baker and Charlie Companies fanned out to the left of the two companies of 2/29.



Love Day, Okinawa

How Company moved out cautiously along the ridges to the south of the Manna road, sending deep patrols into the hills; they were already familiar with this territory. Captain Jorgensen of Item Company was held in the CP with a badly strained knee; 1st Lieutenant Harvey F. Brooks led the company toward the high interior ridges. East of Toguchi there is a draw down which a fair-sized little stream runs. This valley gave adequate cover to the advancing company till it came up to the foothills before the high ridge. The company started up the steep hill in dense woods. Suddenly the woods around them came alive with Japs; the first platoon, led by Lieutenant Stone, came directly under the fire of two heavy artillery pieces; heavy mortar shells began to fall. Lieutenant Stone set up machine guns on a little knoll to his rear and began to draw back under their fire, but there were Japs all up and down the line of troops, and the company became badly disorganized, attempting to withdraw to a place where they could make a stand and to evacuate their wounded. At almost the same moment of time How Company came under heavy mortar fire, but the men were along a ridge top where there were lines of Japanese trenches. In these the troops found shelter and there were few casualties.

Colonel Wright on a hill almost directly at the apex of the diverging paths of the companies got the news of the simultaneous attack, but presently the radio man of Item Company was killed and he lost contact with that company entirely. He ordered a platoon from How Company up to the assistance of Item Company and withdrew the rest of How Company toward the perimeter of his defence. The only news of Item Company he received was from returning Marines whose accounts were not very clear or coherent. At this time an aerial observer sent in news that a column of Japs was approaching along the coast road with the apparent intention of attacking his Command Post.

Colonel Wright sent out to recall George Company immediately, and Captain James R. Stockman, Bn-3, started pulling all the headquarters men together for an immediate defence. Nothing more was heard of the column, however, and George Company returned without incident to the perimeter after a rapid march. Item Company gradually re-organized and withdrew and joined How Company. Colonel Bleasdale at this time received the news of the attack on the two companies of 3/29 and of their withdrawal.

Able Company, meanwhile, under Captain R. J. Kautz, went forward warily, keeping to the higher ground to the south of the road. Colonel Bleasdale told him of the attack on 3/29 but urged him to continue his advance to take the enemy attacking 3/29 in the rear. Able Company went forward with growing nervousness; men in the company heard the Japs in the woods above them, and they were moreover moving through territory in which there had been Japanese bivouacs. They came out at one point where a new military road crossed their path and went down past a low cliff face to the Manna road. The company swung south to avoid the cliff and started to cross. The Japanese struck just as about half the company had crossed. Machine guns covered the road and mortar shells fell all along the line. The platoons gave up the attempt to reassemble. The rear platoon which had suffered the heavier casualties withdrew and set up a hasty defensive position. After dark they got back to the Battalion CP, though some of the men stayed with the casualties throughout the night. The forward section under Captain Kautz went forward till they got onto a high knoll. They dug in for the night and reported their position to Colonel Bleasdale.

Baker and Charlie Companies had returned about noon to the Command Post without incident: they had found several deserted bivouac areas of the Nips but not the Nips themselves. Promptly, on the news of the attack on Able Company, Lieutenant Colonel Moreau led out the two companies to their rescue. They paralleled the Manna road on the low ridges to the north, but as they came toward the place opposite where Able Company was emplaced they came under heavy fire from what was later determined

to be 25 millimeter guns. The guns were firing from a range of nearly two thousand yards (men could see some of the tracers bouncing off the hills far to the rear). The explosive shells stopped their forward advance and set fire to a dry patch of woodland ahead of them. They waited behind the ridge till dawn before returning.

Dog and Easy Companies had gone up to a high narrow ridge to the north and had there run into a small body of Nips who were, as was discovered later, manning an observation tower well camouflaged among the trees. The troops came under knee mortar fire and lost three killed, but they killed 11 Nips and returned.

So far the honors had gone entirely to Colonel Udo, and yet he had not committed any sizeable force to the attack. He had secured a maximum of damage with very little expenditure of men.

The next day General Shepherd, the three battalion commanders, and Colonel Bleasdale met at the Command Post of 1/29 for final council on the attack. General Shepherd issued the orders for the assault: 1/29 and 2/29 were to march out to the north of the Manna road, and as they marched, to peel off and assume defensive positions along those ridges. They were to be the anvil. Meanwhile 2/4 had been trucked from the east coast to the west and then marched up beyond Awa; 1/4 was alerted for a similar movement. For this battle 3/29 was to be attached to Colonel Shapley. The three battalions were to attack abreast toward the central hill mass, later to be given its correct name of Yae-take. The Marine's map of the interior was at this time, however, wholly inaccurate for the interior of the peninsula and there was no effective knowledge of the road nets. A Japanese map of the terrain had, however, recently been discovered and was now in the process of reproduction on a headquarters ship, **USS ELDORADO**.

About all that Division knew at this time was that there were two ridges one behind the other running roughly parallel to one another inland from the road about 1000 yards. These ridges labeled R-1 and R-2 were the primary objectives of the attack.

The battle for Yae-take has several interesting features and some that are unique in this war. It was, first of all, a battle of maneuver. While the general objective was assigned, it was necessary for each battalion and even each company to take its objective by its own resources and in its own way. In the hills through which the men moved there could be no common line and it was impossible for all units to keep in contact. Second, it was a battle of opportunity. There was no way at this time by which an accurate map of the area could be secured. The details of the terrain before the battalions were largely unknown; company and battalion leaders had to seize on their methods of approach and change them when conditions changed. Third, it was a battle in which the infantry had to depend almost entirely on their organic weapons. Artillery and air strikes proved more effective after the heights were secured, but tanks were out of the question. Fourth, finally it was a battle fought in terrain where there were few roads; supplies had to be carried up by hand over small trails. For a short distance bulldozers could help, but man power was the final answer.¹⁸

On the morning of April 14 the troops of 3/29 and 2/4 lined up along the road and set off inland on an azimuth course, each battalion with two companies in assault. On

¹⁸Though all troops were supplied with both ammunition and rations and water during the few days of this battle, the events of the battle proved that Marine Battalions are seriously roadbound, and not effectively equipped for mountain operations. Bulldozers opened up roads, and a supply route was developed which could be used nearly to the front, but an enormous amount both of time and effort was necessary to manhandle supplies to the front lines. One platoon of a company was usually occupied in lugging up boxes of rations, and ammunition or carrying up the heavy five gallon water cans. 1/29 used one air drop when it had taken its mountain objective, but this air drop was ineffective: many of the plastic water containers broke, the air drop was five hours late, and finally, a whole platoon had to be detailed to carry the parachute gear down to the nearest highway. It was suggested at this time that large plastic waterbags be supplied to be carried by the troops; that some form of iron ration other than D (which produces thirst) be used.

the left Colonel Wright kept Item Company in reserve, still shaken from its experience in the hills two days before, guarding the road and flank of the advancing companies.

Both battalions worked steadily inland without much opposition, reached the R-1 line at 1000 and the R-2 at 1200. Colonel Udo had elected not to defend this ground and the enemy, if there in any force, fell back before the advancing troops. In the afternoon, Charlie Company of 2/4 set off up a trail leading inland from Sakimotobu to seize a ridge nearly 1000 yards to the rear and to the right of 2/4. As they turned from the trail to go up the ridge they ran into nambu fire. Able Company under Captain Eastment went up to their support, swung left, and came up on the ridge alongside Charlie Company. Baker Company waited in reserve in the valley below.

From the second ridge on, the battalions had met a running opposition from small groups of machine gunners and riflemen. The Japanese had complete observation of all our movements; they had sighted their machine guns and registered their mortars on our approach routes; the guns and riflemen could not be reached by our scouts of flank patrols, and Japanese followed their routine custom of allowing a section or platoon of our troops to pass across an open saddle, and then firing on the platoon behind. Usually the fire was directed at officers. It was dangerous to show a map, to wave a directing arm, even to be distinguished from the file of men about one by the possession of a pistol instead of a carbine. Under these circumstances the companies had to deploy with extreme rapidity from what was really an approach march to an assault formation. Movement off the trail was fast; men in the fire teams knew what to do and how to proceed.

The delaying actions ran all along the front; but though the country was rough, there was room to maneuver. By taking shrewd advantage of terrain, it was possible for one company to take out a machine gun in front of another. When How Company, 29th, on the right flank of that battalion was held up by machine guns on a small hill to their front, Easy Company, 4th, pushed ahead in its zone of action. How Company circled out into the area it had cleared and took the hill from the rear, while Easy Company deployed to protect them. These were book tactics, but until now in the Pacific, the Marines had had little opportunity to use them. They had had to fight on small islands against solid lines of defenses.

By nightfall of the 14th, the three battalions (minus one company—Baker Company of the 4th Marines in reserve) were on or near their objectives. On the left George Company had dug in along a little stream in the valley below Green Hill, their objective. How Company had drifted right and was on the westerly edge of a ridge before Hill 200, with Easy Company. Directly in front of them was the bold mass of Hill 200, across a narrow valley. Fox and George Companies were behind the ridge. On the right Able and Charlie Companies were along a twisting ridge that looked down into valleys before the high peak of Yae-take itself. The valleys in front of them were boiling with Japs. A fire team that cautiously probed the valley in front of Able Company was fired on by a machine gun and the company commander had to use smoke to get the wounded out.

Division had laid the plan for the attack, but in an operation over rough terrain such as the troops were in, the details of the plan had to be altered day by day. The General and his Operations Officer followed the situation not from maps alone but from the Observation Posts of the battalions, and there, after consultation with the Commanding Officers of the 29th and the 4th, issued first the fragmentary orders for the next day and then the final order. Essentially, however, the control was in the hands of Colonel Shapley who constantly conferred with the battalion commanders. In preparation for the final assault Division had moved both the 3/4 and the Weapons Company

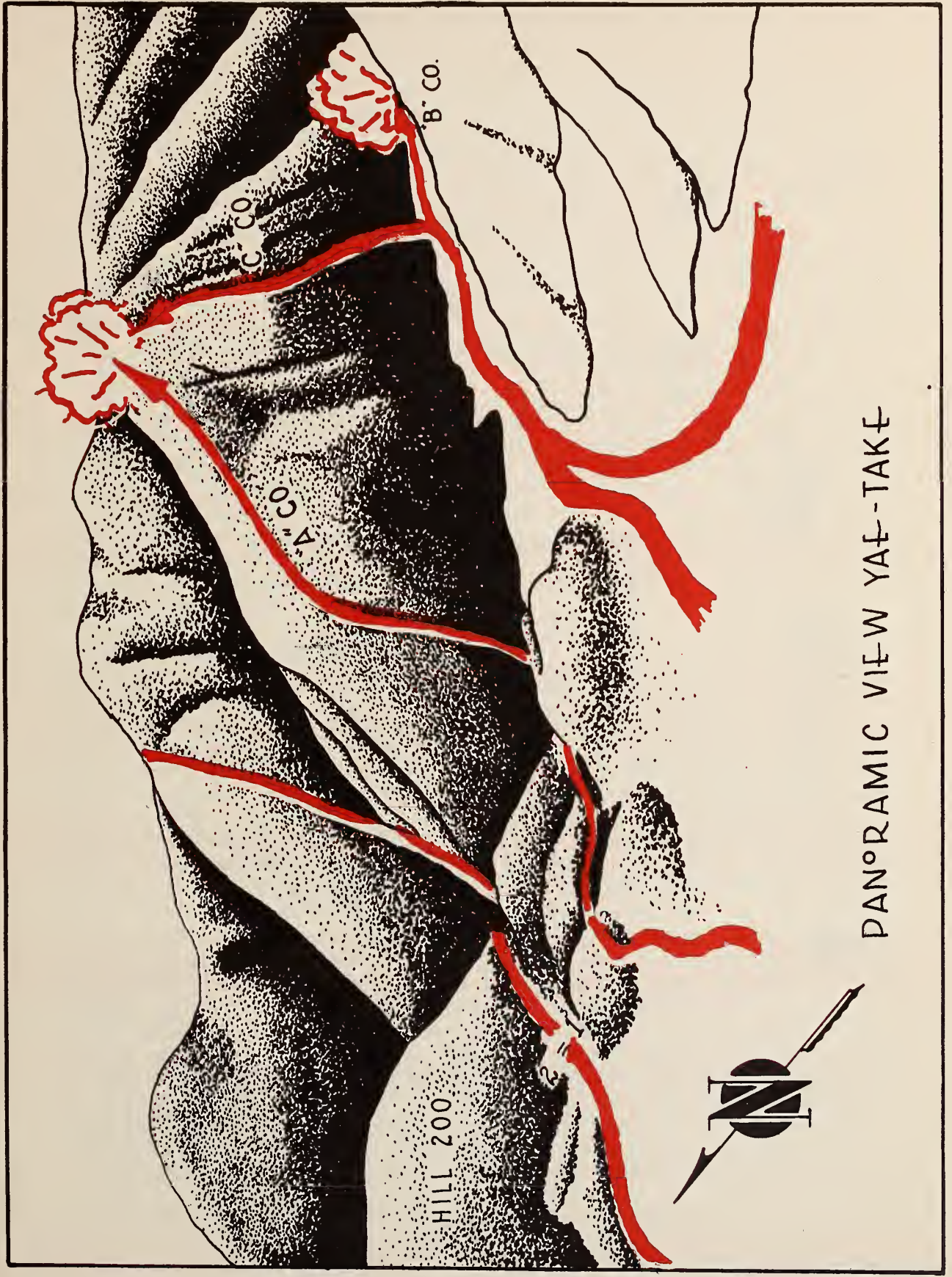
up toward Sakimotobu and held the two in reserve. One other bit of country between 3/4 and Nago was being patrolled by 1/22.

The Division had also moved the Reconnaissance Company to the northern tip of the island at Bise to seize a site for a radar station and guard against counter landings. For a while the company had Fox Company, 29th, attached to it, and later King Company, 4th. The 77th Infantry Division was taking Ie-Shima at this time and the sea before Bise was alive with sea and air battles.

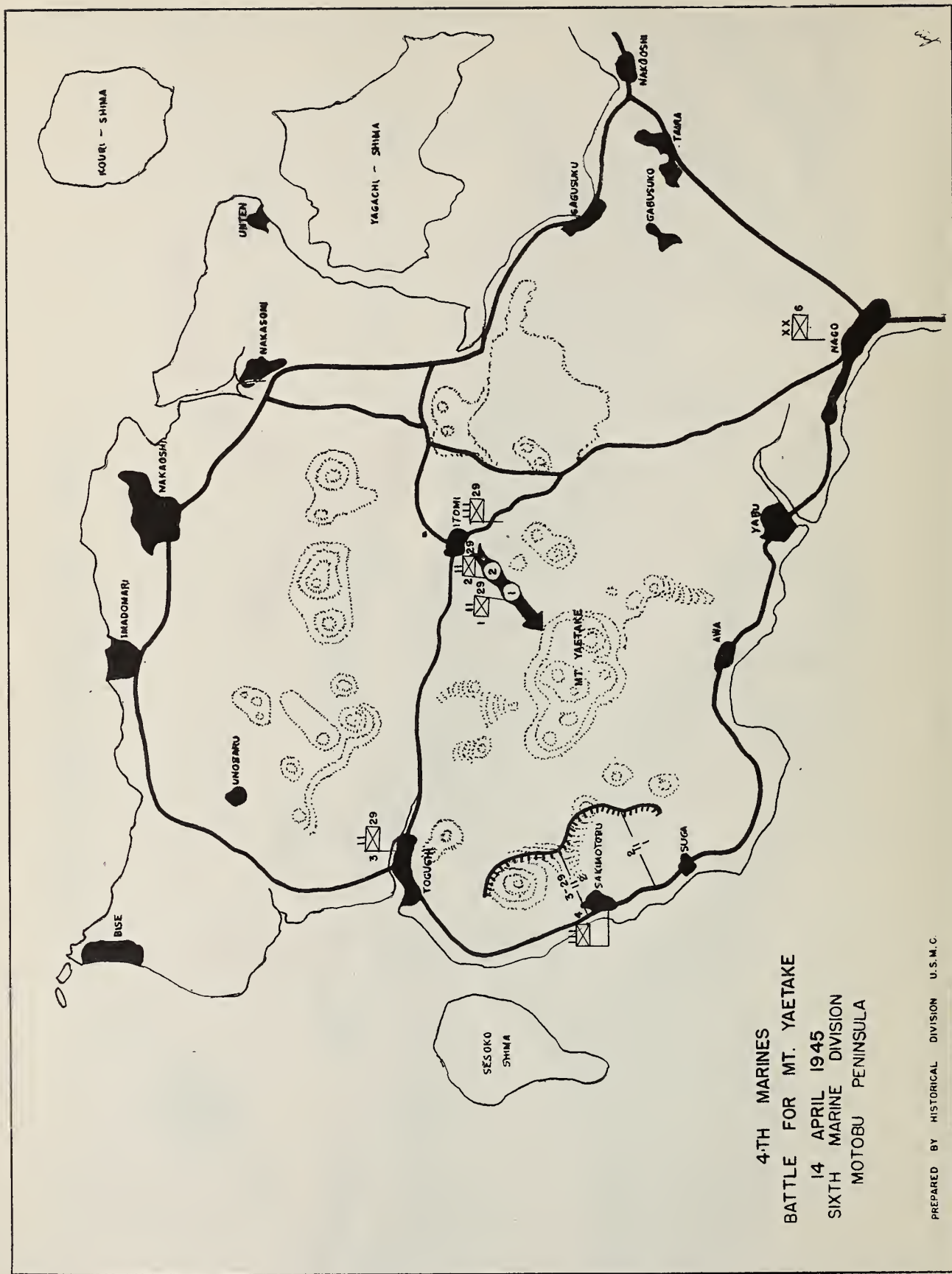
The attack now could center on specific targets. Colonel Shapley knew that the enemy had two strongpoints; one was on top of Green Hill where he had two 75mm cannon; the other was the summit of Yae-take, to which Colonel Udo was withdrawing his advanced units as they were out-maneuvered. From the positions along the ridge, the companies of the 1st Battalion could see groups of Japanese retreating up the trails that led behind Yae-take. Originally, Yae-take was in the zone of action of 2/4, but as the companies of the battalion went forward they came into a region of low brush covering transverse ridges. On the 14th the battalion had taken R-2 after a sharp fight. It was obvious that the companies were making a frontal assault on a well-fortified place where the Japanese were suitably emplaced to receive them. On 15 April the direction and objectives of the attack were changed. On the left the two companies of 3/29 were to seize Green Hill. In the centre, Easy and George Companies were to assault Hill 200, but to aid in the attack, Able Company and Charlie Company were to press out on the ridge to their right, edging along the uneven valley that lay between them and Yae-take. This flanking action would put them in a position to take Yae-take from a more vulnerable position. In the morning Easy and George Companies went forward over low brushy ground under heavy mortar fire that caused 35 casualties before they reached the next ridge. They now faced Hill 200 across a narrow valley. The critical point of the attack was to the front of George Company. There, nearly at the foot of Yae-take, was the bare knob that dominated all approaches. The defenses of the hill were familiar: two noses came down into the valley from the ridge in front of the companies. Between them was a U-shaped hollow. George Company assaulted the long sloping shoulder that led up to the bare knob; Fox Company tried to go up the ridge to the left. Near the summit was a narrow saddle behind which the Japanese had set up their mortars. George Company could take the height before the summit but could not hold it against continual counterattacks. For the most of the day two platoons held this height, but as evening drew on, they withdrew toward the base. They suffered 65 casualties. Fox Company on the left had much the same experience. They met enfilade fire from the saddle as they reached the top. For the night the companies of the battalion dug in across the bases of the ridges.

The attack had, however succeeded. It had protected the march of 1/4. Able and Charlie Companies had moved east all day long. They had lost their battalion commander, Major Bernard W. Green, as he stood in an observation post directing the movement of his companies across a saddle. By late afternoon they were in possession of a height from which they could shoot into the hollow from which the Japanese had defended themselves against George Company. On the right of the two companies Baker Company had circled far out to the east and joined Charlie Company at its point of farthest advance. For the night it was linked to Charlie Company.

The 1/4 now was entrenched along a curving ridge which faced Mt. Yae-take. Directly in front of it was an open valley with several small hills rising in it. To its extreme left was the high hogback ridge of Hill 200, and to the right of Hill 200 was the hill that George Company, 4th, had assaulted. The assault on George Company had prevented any volume of fire being directed on the eastern advance of the 1st Battalion. The hill was



PANORAMIC VIEW YAF-TAKE



4TH MARINES
BATTLE FOR MT. YAETAKE
14 APRIL 1945
SIXTH MARINE DIVISION
MOTOBU PENINSULA

flanked and during the night and early morning, observers could see Japanese soldiers withdrawing up the ravine that led upward and eastward past Mt. Yae-take.

The battle for Yae-take had started as a simple frontal assault toward a final objective — the mountain itself: two battalions had driven forward and seized the preliminary objectives in classic fashion; that is, with two companies in assault and one in reserve. Originally a third battalion, 1/4 had advanced only to protect the flank of 2/4 as it drove forward to Hill 200. Then recognition of the difficulties that faced a frontal assault came clear as the troops moved over the terrain. 1/4 had changed the direction of its assault 90 degrees and driven east for a whole day while George/4 had protected its flank. Now 1/4 again changed its direction and prepared for the final assault on the summit of the mountain. In this period of two days Lieutenant Colonel Bruno Hochmuth had marched his battalion, 3/4, out along the coast road and up into the hills till he made contact with the right flank of 1/4, now under Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Beans, who had left his position as executive officer of the regiment. But 3/4 faced almost west, ready to sweep down across the north slopes of Yae-take after 1/4 had taken it. The lines took almost the form of a question mark or a sickle.

On the morning of 15 April 3/29 took Green Hill¹⁹ after a maneuver in which two companies reversed their positions. On the night of 14 April How Company had taken over the western edge of Hill 200; George Company was entrenched on the forward slope of the R-2 ridge above the road that ran through the valley. Rather than take How Company from its commanding position where it could cover the near slope of Green Hill with fire, Colonel Wright sent George Company across the front of How Company and into the assault under the protection of How Company's machine guns. As the assault moved up the hill, Captain Tomasello led his company down behind George Company and to the left of it up on Green Hill. Both companies reached the summit at nearly the same time.

As it went up the hill, George Company ran into a series of cave positions in the undergrowth that covered the lower portion of the hill. Above the undergrowth the hill rose sharply, a bare mass of twisted coral formation. The platoon under 2nd Lieutenant James H. Green first came under fire; he rallied his men and led them forward throwing grenades like baseballs. Though he was killed, the company rushed the hillside after close hand-to hand combat mostly with grenades. The rocks gave them some protection as they moved forward. How Company to the left met little opposition. The rest of the day the two companies spent trying to close caves with demolitions and flame-throwers. Both the field pieces that had been firing on the Marines were in caves, but before men could reach one of the caves, the gun crew had wheeled the gun till its muzzle pointed toward one wall, fired the piece, and collapsed the cave mouth. Even during the night the men in the foxholes had the peculiar sensation of hearing muffled explosions beneath them as the remaining Japanese garrison blew themselves up.

The plan for the final assault was unusual. The 3/29 was to hold its positions along the top of Green Hill that fronted on a deep valley running down toward Manna. Easy and Fox Companies were to maintain their positions on and behind Hill 200. The 1st Battalion/4 was to attack across their fronts to seize the Peak. On the right of the 1/4, 3/4 was to march out to protect the flank of the advance. By mid-morning the troops were supplied. 3/4 was in position and the attack was ready to begin. In the early morning Able Company had moved down and taken three small hills in the valley below them and then the hill that George Company had assaulted. It now waited in the protection of its slopes. Charlie Company was to its right at the base of the ravine which led eastward. Baker Company was on the ridges to the rear and right.

At the start of the attack, Able Company started up the steep slope ahead of it toward

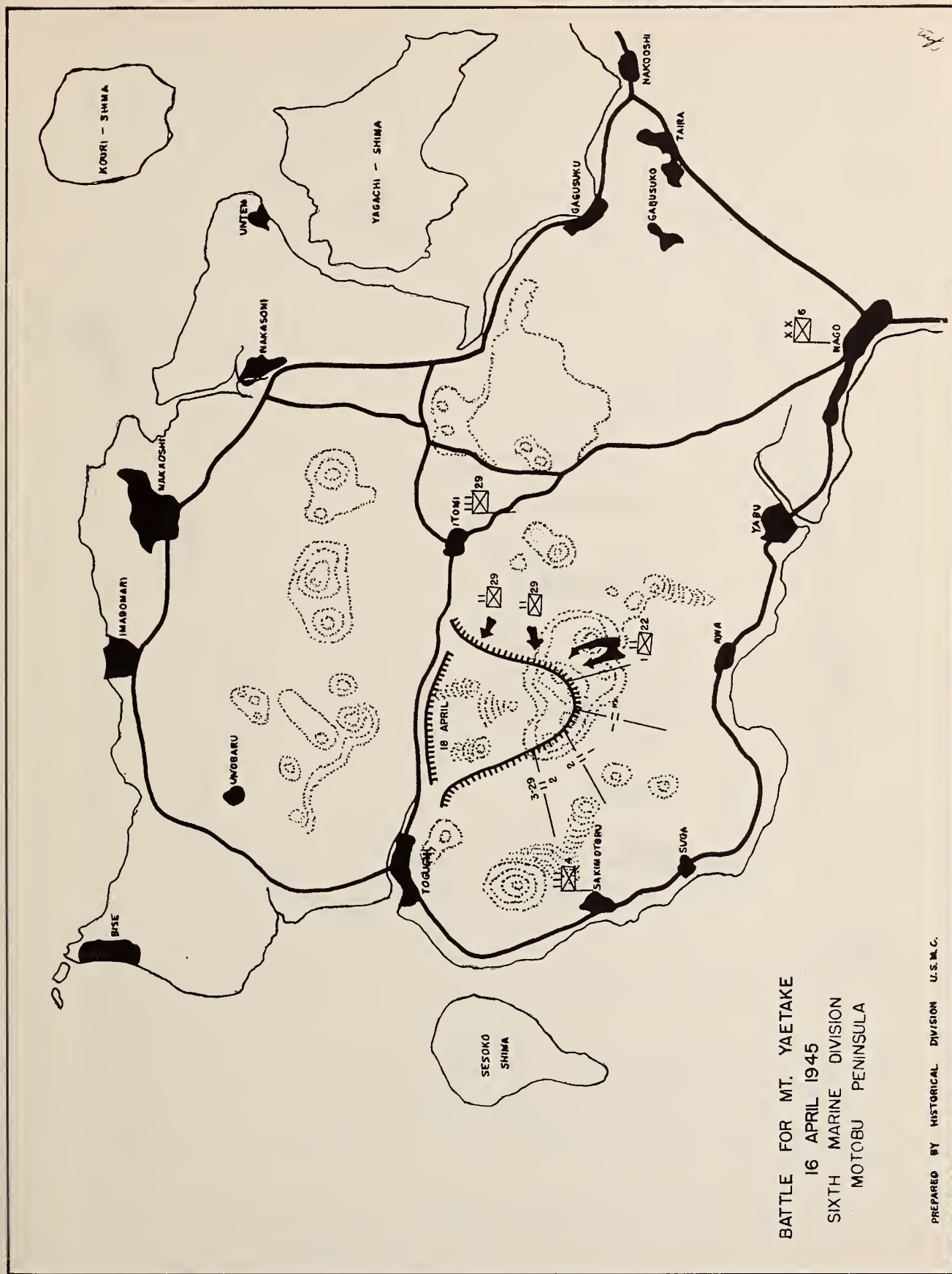
¹⁹The hill was named for Lieutenant J. H. Green who was killed on its slopes.

the summit. On its lower levels the slope was wooded and the company could proceed without observation. To the right of Able Company, Charlie Company started up the ravine to flank the summit. Baker Company waited in reserve; 3/4 started moving on the flank. As they progressed, the 2/4 mortar observers from Hill 200 registered in their mortars on the peaks to the rear and kept up a constant pounding. From the base of the peninsula, 3/15 was firing on the eastern slopes of the mountain. The leading platoon of Able Company came out of the woods and faced nearly 100 yards of steep bare rock before the summit. To this point it had apparently progressed unobserved. As it swarmed out on the rocks, knee mortar shells and hand grenades exploded over the whole face of the slope; our troops had no position of advantage, and nothing to retaliate against. They pulled back into the edge of the woods. That morning the battalion CP had been moved to the very base of the mountain, and Lieutenant Colonel Fred D. Beans had been able to watch the progress of the attack closely. He ordered Charlie Company to leave the ravine and get to the top as quickly as possible. Charlie Company headed up a shallow valley. Near the top it ran into rifle fire. While the 1st platoon held the enemy, the 3rd and 2nd platoons crept back and edged over to the left till they had assembled on Able Company. When the two platoons had gathered Able Company again drove forward. The final assault was a charge that sent the platoons over the summit and into the masses of the Japanese. Second Lieutenant Eugene P. C. Constantin was one of the first on the summit but was killed trying to drag a wounded man to safety. The mountain was named for him; the name lasted in the men's minds even though it later was given the official Japanese title. By late afternoon we had the summit, Able Company was on the highest peak and the three platoons of Charlie Company were to the right. Down below them the men could see Japs hurrying and running, all the signs of a counter-attack. Heavy mortar fire and more shelling protected the men on the summit while everybody in battalion headquarters rushed ammunition up to the summit. At 1850 the expected Japanese charge came, and about 100 enemy were killed. That night the companies held the summit with one company precariously stretched down the steep east and west slopes. They had water but no food, and they were exposed on the rocky slopes and bare top where they could get no protection from fire. There was no movement of the Japanese.

In the attack from the east the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 29th had also conquered the hill mass which was a second center to the Japanese defence. It had not been the original objective of the battalions, however.²⁰ The whole region through which the two battalions were to maneuver was cloud covered on the map; there was no indication even of the road net. At first, the two long columns of the battalions, 1/29 in the lead, had gone south into a region of sharp razor-backed ridges. Then they had swung to the west with the intention of cutting the Manna road. Late in the afternoon, the forward echelon of the 1st Battalion came out on a high wooded saddle from which they could see the region before them. In the valley in front of them a patrol of Baker Company had a sharp fire-fight with a small scattering of Japanese and lost two men. On the saddle the two battalion commanders consulted. Without warning a heavy mortar barrage began to fall, walking up the trail, across the saddle and down the reverse slope. One shell wounded 13 men and killed one—most of the S-2 section of the battalion, 1st Battalion, 29th Marines. Later conjecture was that though the advance before the hill had been cautious the high silvery rods of the JASCO radios had given the position away.

The two battalions were split for the night. A forward echelon dug in behind a ridge; the second battalion remained behind the saddle. Mortar shells walked across the saddle and along the ridge top and from high on the mountain shells from 25mm guns

²⁰In a review of the northern phase before his officers, General Shepherd had pointed out with some acerbity that two battalions had apparently been so bewildered by terrain that they had gone 180 degrees off their prescribed azimuth course.



BATTLE FOR MT. YAETAKE
16 APRIL 1945
SIXTH MARINE DIVISION
MOTOBU PENINSULA

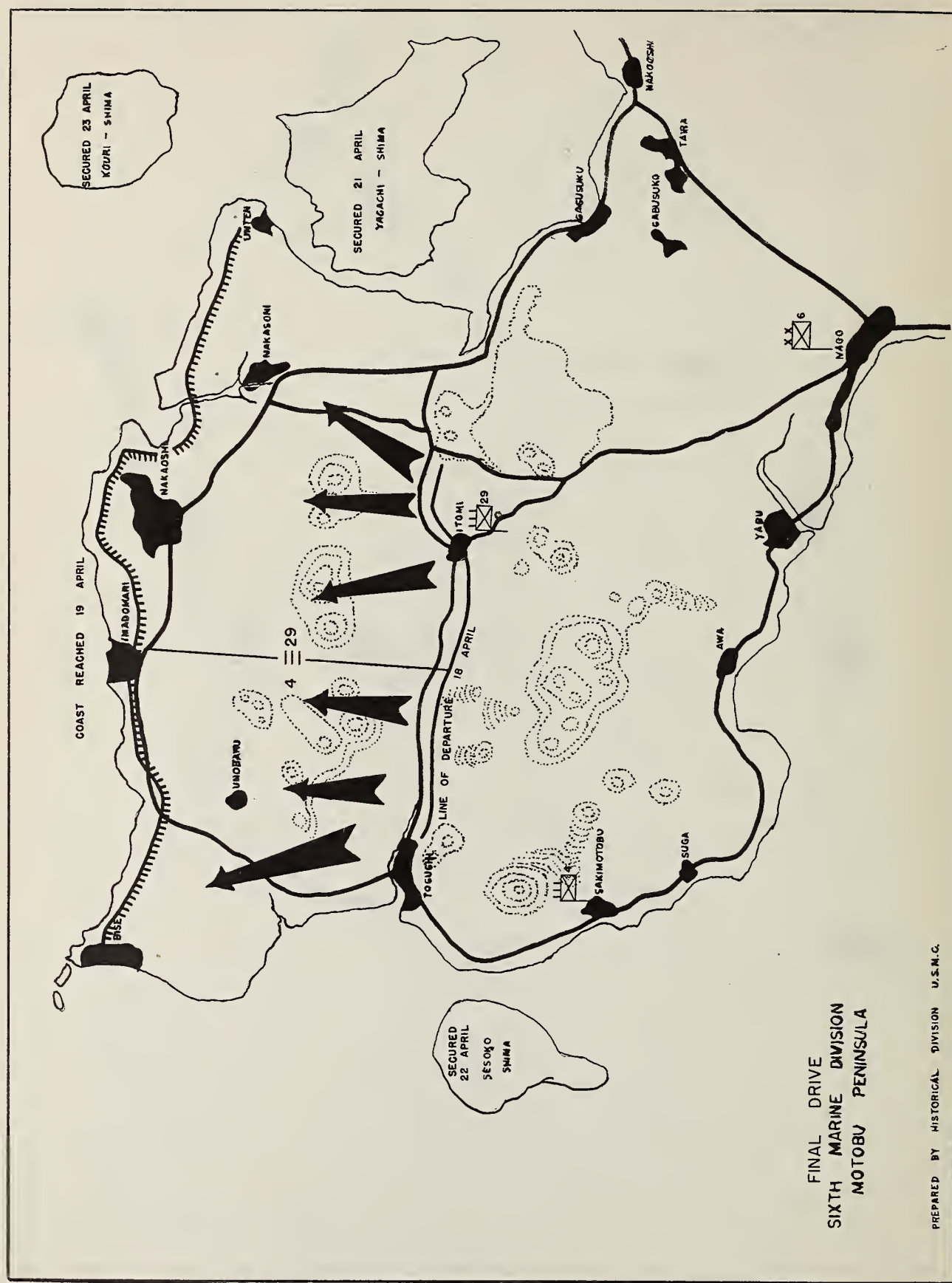
PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 5

FINAL DRIVE SIXTH MARINE DIVISION MOTOBU PENINSULA

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 6



exploded against the forward slope of the hills. The enemy had, however, revealed his position clearly. Captain Barnet of the S-2 section, before he was wounded, had spotted the movements of Japanese on the high mountain top that faced the battalions, and the battalion's 81mm mortars had taken the mountain top under fire. After dusk the tracer bullets of the 25mm shells had also given very clear azimuths on the enemy positions. The two battalions were obviously facing the core of the eastern edge of enemy resistance.

On 15 April Colonel Victor H. Bleasdale was relieved and Colonel William J. Whaling assumed command and came up to look the situation over. The battalions lay dug in just above a road that led south from Itomi. Across the road and some 1500 yards inland lay the mountain mass from which the enemy fire had been coming. It was protected by a sharp ridge that ran slantwise back from the road. Farther south along the road another ridge rose sharply. These two ridges guarded the approach to a horseshoe of hill masses dominated by the hill from which the fire had come. Colonel Whaling ordered that these two guarding ridges be taken.

The battalions at this time were being supplied by the road that ran across their front, the one that led directly back to Itomi. Why this was not kept under fire by the Japanese is one of the minor mysteries of the operation. It is possible that this road which for a short distance out of Itomi had paralleled the Manna road had been mistaken by the battalion commanders for the Manna road itself. In a country as broken as was this, with inadequate maps, it was difficult to plot a road map or to identify trails and roads.

Captain George Heiden had Charlie Company; he was put in command after the original CO, Captain Edwin H. Rodgers, had been wounded on the march north. He took his company up the ridge without opposition and dug in along the wooded crest. Captain Alan Meissner of Easy Company took his men up the road across a narrow entrance defile and up the other ridge. He also reached the top of the steep nose up which he had gone, but found that the Japanese were entrenched farther up along the top behind masses of coral. His company suffered several casualties during the night from knee mortar shells. Dog Company and Baker Company remained in their original defensive perimeters. The movement of Heiden's company had apparently been unobserved; but the hilltop was heavily shelled during the night. The captain gave strict orders to withhold fire, and in the woods the men lay silent in their foxholes. One shell landed squarely in one hole and blew a man to pieces.

In the morning they were rewarded for their discipline. In the twilight of early dawn, the men saw a column of Japanese unconcernedly winding their way up the hill, killed a good many, and put the rest to flight. On the other hill, Captain Meissner received the order to advance. He sent out two squads one on either side of the ridge to make a cautious reconnaissance. They immediately came under heavy fire and with difficulty got back to the perimeter through the covering fires of their BAR's. Captain Meissner now secured permission from the battalion commander to call down accurate 81mm fire on the ridge in front of him. The barrage killed many of the Japanese and the company moved forward with little trouble.

Later that morning Baker Company passed through Charlie Company, crossed over a saddle to the tip of a hill mass that overhung the great horseshoe defile itself, and lay directly under the mountain top that was their objective. Charlie Company tied in with them and the Battalion Command Post set up on the steep slopes behind the ridge. On the forward slope any movement met immediate rifle fire or bursts from a machine gun, and that night the Japanese shelled the summit with the explosive shells of their 25mm.²¹

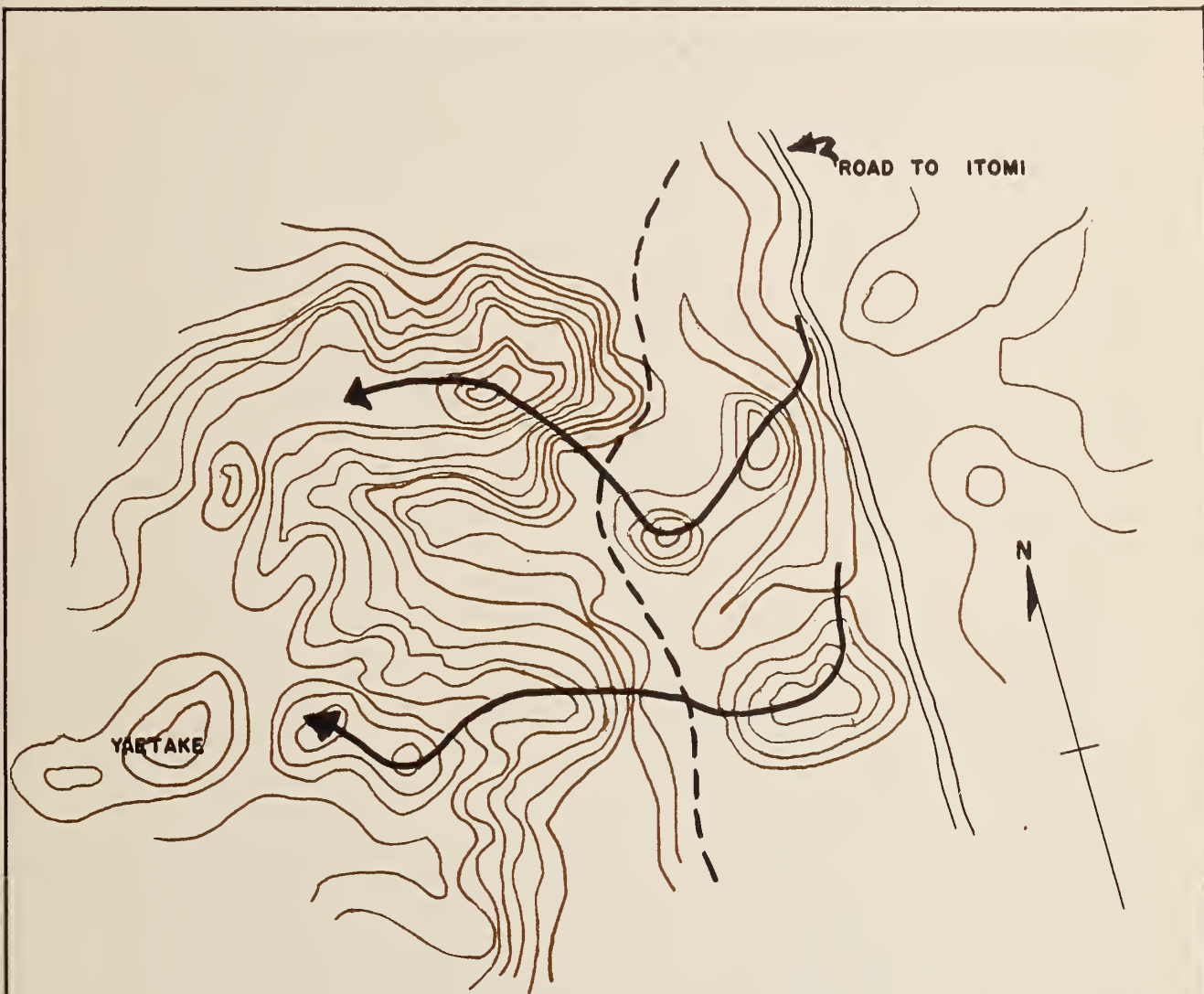
²¹These guns were antiaircraft weapons taken from ships, since they had naval mounts. The brass shell was goosenecked, nearly as large as that of a 37mm. The shell was explosive and with a terrific velocity. The guns were much more effective than the ordinary 20mm.

From the bare coral tip of the ridge on which he was, Lieutenant Colonel Moreau could see clearly the objective for his battalion. In front of him there was a long gentle slope leading nearly to the top of the mountain. On its upper edges there were obvious emplacements. Toward the Manna road the mountain fell off abruptly in a series of bold buttresses. On the inner side toward the defile the slope was thickly covered with undergrowth and very steep. The Colonel determined on a surprise attack. He sent one squad to the foot of the long slope in front of him with orders for them to march in single file across an open meadow leading to the north slope, then to turn in the heavy woods, and keep circling to give the enemy the impression that he was assembling his forces for an attack from the north. Captain Heiden he sent down into the defile with orders to climb up the steep reverse slope and seize the summit from the rear. A smoke bomb exploded on the summit was to be the signal for success.

When Charlie Company had dropped down into the narrow valley under the machine guns of Baker Company, Colonel Moreau called down all available artillery fire on the long slope before him and on the summits of the northern buttresses. The Battalion mortars picked up individual targets. At 1200 a burst of smoke from the summit announced that Charlie Company was on the objective. Baker Company immediately started to climb the mountain, and later the Battalion Command Post followed. The conquest of the mountain was the result of complete surprise and effective artillery fire. Examination of the slope facing the guns disclosed nearly 100 dead Japanese and a fearful execution on caves and emplacements. Caves opening toward the guns had been blasted shut or collapsed. In one cave were crouched a dozen Japanese all killed by either the concussion or fragments of a shell which had landed near the mouth. Numerous 13.2 emplacements either had been blasted away or had lost their gunners by direct hits.

Supply on the mountain top was a problem, and Colonel Moreau called for an air drop the next morning at eight o'clock. Behind 1/29, Easy Company had pushed along its ridge. Dog Company had crossed the saddle to the southern wall of the defile and worked out along it. The whole defensive sector of the Japanese was now in our possession. This attack had not been planned, but it had proved effective: instead of the hammer and anvil tactics (to use the dramatic terms of the newspaper military commentator) that were to be used, the two battalions of the 29th had become the second half of a pair of pincers and caught the main forces of the Japanese between them and the 4th Marines. More simply they had, possibly by mistake, swung around a flank of the enemy and destroyed it.

In the morning orders called for a patrol to the Manna road at the foot of the mountain and then a march down that road to make contact with the 4th Marines. Captain Lyle E. Specht took Baker Company down the buttresses of the mountain toward the road, sending men into the narrow ravines, and working off the trails that ran down the ridges. The platoons killed a few Japanese but they had also discovered that the face of the mountain was covered with small emplacements housing either 25mm guns or 13.2mm's. One large position equipped with American 81mm mortars was dug in and carefully camouflaged on a little terrace that commanded both ends of the Itomi-Manna road. By noon the company had struck down to a new military road the Japanese had been building and had discovered a supply dump in caves along that road and in a hollow by a stream. There were no Japanese. The company moved out along the road to a designated point but made no contact with the 4th Marines. Toward evening they returned. During the day they found that two planes had mistaken the Command Post for enemy troops and had thrown in six rockets without warning. The airdrop that day had been a failure. There was an insufficient number of rations; many of the water bags had broken; the drop had not been made until 12 o'clock. Moreover, a platoon of



TERRAIN, 29TH MARINES SECTOR

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 7.

Cfms

men had to be detailed to the duty of packing up the parachutes and containers and carrying them to the nearest road at the foot of the mountain.

On this same day the battalions of the 4th Marines were driving down Mt. Yae-take, and all day long the 3/29 killed the Japanese that were flushed out ahead of the advancing lines. In the long valley before the 3/29 they counted 300 dead Japanese, casualties from the mortars of the companies and battalion. Area fire during the night had apparently caught the Japanese as they tried to retreat down toward the river. Behind the mountain the Marines found great supplies of stores, the Command Post of Colonel Udo, and the elaborate telephone central through which he had controlled his forces. The 3/29 remained on the ridge that night but the next day, 18 April, they withdrew, and were taken around in trucks to Itomi and sent up a high hill above it, both to act in support of the 4th and the other two battalions of the 29th when they drove north to the sea, and to close the base of the peninsula to those trying to escape. They killed some few Japanese as they were moving into position.

On 19 April the 4th Marines and the two battalions of the 29th came down off the Itomi-Manna road and marched up the hills to the north. The three battalions of the 29th met no appreciable resistance as they went up into the hills and down to the sea. The 4th Marines had one more skirmish.

The route of the regiment was along a narrow winding mountain road. King Company patrolled the area to the east of the road, and Easy Company took that to the left. As Easy Company came up onto a sort of table land, the highest point between the Manna road and the northern coast, a platoon of Easy Company sent out to the left ran into something more formidable than a patrol and came under heavy machine gun fire from fixed positions. Easy Company kept its position and Lieutenant Leo J. Gottsponer took George Company out to the assistance of the platoon.

So far in the operation, there had been only two days of rain, on the 11th and the 12th, when the battalions of the 29th had first gone up into Motobu. Now on this day rain came driving down in great gusts so that the ground was sodden, and a driving mist, half rain and half water blanketed the hills. Gottsponer's Company moved out in the rain and found the Easy Company platoon clinging close to a nose diagonally across a valley of rice paddies from a steep ridge where the Japanese had built their entrenchments and set up their machine guns. The Japanese had a good field of fire to the east and south. (See the accompanying sketch). Lieutenant Gottsponer set up his machine guns near the edge of the nose. Beyond the open valley that lay before him was a small pinnacle of rock almost perfectly round, hardly more than 50 feet high. In a burst of rain which limited visibility to a few feet, he took the Easy Company platoon and his first platoon across the valley and into positions on either side of the pinnacle, the Easy platoon to the east and his own platoon to the west. Then as his machine guns renewed their battle with the Japanese, he worked his platoon up the forward slope of the hill on which the Japanese were entrenched and out along it. The Japanese were so busy with the enemy before them that they did not notice the Marines coming down at them on the steep slope behind. As the platoon of George Company made its attack, the platoon from Easy Company rushed the reverse slope, making its way from cave to cave, using flamethrowers and what demolitions they had. In all they killed 75 Japanese and captured a quantity of machine guns, 20mm guns, and one 75mm gun which apparently had not been fired. The four platoons entrenched that night on the ridge they had taken; they were a thousand yards from the rest of the battalion. In the morning they marched on to the sea without further incident. The three battalions dug in that night along the divide with King Company a thousand yards to the right and front of their lines guarding an approach route. On the right of the 4th Marines, the lines of the 29th Marines stretched across the hills.

In the morning the two regiments reached the sea; there was no further opposition, but the silent hills and the sunny trails were lined with abandoned pillboxes and defensive positions, many of them old and dug years before. The Japanese defenders of Motobu were by no means all dead, but they had evidently surrendered this territory without thought of further resistance.

For two days the 4th Marines rested by the sea, bathed in the surf, and got their first change of clothes. 10-1 rations came up and the auxiliary packs. Then the 29th Marines moved to permanent positions around the perimeter from which they could patrol the interior, and the 4th Marines were entrucked and carried to the other side of the island where they were to start patrolling.

Across the base of the peninsula the Reconnaissance Company, the Engineers, and the Tank Battalion were set up, with outposts to catch stragglers from the battle attempting to flee to the interior. During the nights there were steady attempts to infiltrate through the lines; a good many Japanese were killed, and some escaped.

During the whole period of the battle for Motobu Peninsula the 22nd Marines had been busy furthering the conquest of the northern part of the island. For one period, however, the 1/22 had been called in to the peninsula and patrolled the area just to the east of the 3/4. The problem of covering by patrol the large land mass of the northern end was difficult. The interior of the island was mountainous, and in the far north was heavily wooded. There were trails all through the interior but no roads. Patrolling was carried on by a system of deep patrols from bivouac areas near the coast. One battalion was on the very tip of the island; another was farther south, and a third, the 1/22 was just above the base of Motobu. From these areas the battalions sent out company patrols, who circled into the interior for from three to five days, and then returned to the coast where they were picked up by LVT's.²²

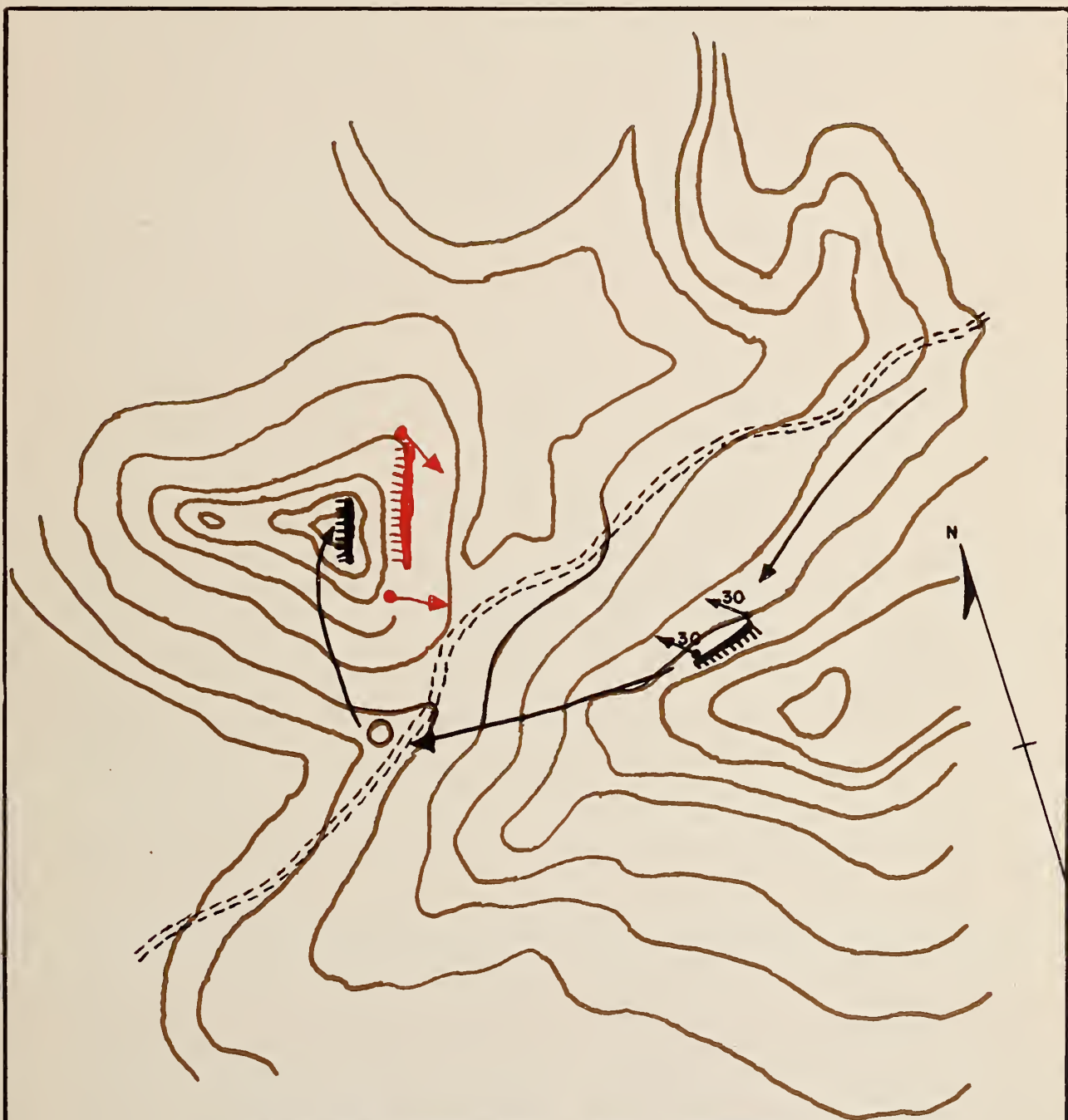
On the east coast the battalions of the 4th picked up patrolling where it had left it. Just before the 3rd Battalion of the 4th Marines had been ordered to Motobu, King Company had marched north on a long patrol of 30 miles to a little port and bay where they had set up a defense to prevent counter landing. Along the route LVT's had kept them supplied. The patrol had been ended by the Mt. Yae-take battle.

There had already been considerable evidence that the guerrilla warfare organized by Colonel Udo was continuing. The withdrawal of 1/22 when it left Miyaji to support the attack of the 4th Marines on Motobu had been noted from the hills. Capture of documents later showed that the local Japanese commander had planned a careful attack from both ends of the town by a force of approximately 45 soldiers. The soldiers attacked from both ends of the town early in the morning, and for a while surrounded our water point. An MP Platoon stationed in the town beat off the attack and the Japanese fled after setting fire to a few houses.

After 1/22 returned to Miyaji and resumed patrolling there were other isolated but harmless attacks. Mortar fire fell in Nago, and there were occasional shots from the hills. An observation plane crashed in the interior of the peninsula; a patrol from the Reconnaissance Company found pilot and observer both dead with their throats cut. Patrols fixed the centre of guerrilla activities in the area around the hill mass of Taniyotake.

The mountain was a typical and carefully chosen control and assembly centre for guerrilla activities. It was not over a thousand yards from the main road which ran across the base of the peninsula from Nago to Taira; two long ridges led down to the level of the road, each with a well-defined and ancient trail along its narrow edge. The whole

²²It is impossible and not particularly profitable to write of these patrols at any length. Some of the engagements that the patrols had are, however, described at some length in the appendix for their possible tactical interest.



"G" & "E" COMPANIES, 4TH MARINES

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 8

Close

great mass was hidden in a heavy forest, almost a jungle in the lower defiles and valleys where the water ran. It had the final advantage of offering ready access to the east coast; from its eastern side a long ridge curved away and down to sea level. The Japanese had set up a bivouac area in the valley just between the two ridges leading to the Nago-Taira road and had evidently prepared for maintaining themselves there for along time; there were large amounts of all sorts of military equipment and food. From the bivouac area they had withdrawal trails, carefully concealed, to the trails on the ridges.

On its return to the area, 1/22 killed a few enemy every night along their company perimeters. The attempts made to penetrate the lines followed the usual tactics, but few enemy were involved — at the most only a squad. Under these circumstances, the companies set up ambushes on all approaches and laid out booby traps. During the day they patrolled the area, gathering in natives. G-2 learned that there was by then a sizeable force of nearly 150 Japanese in the mountain region. On 22 April two companies, Able and Charlie, set out to investigate the region. They circled the mountain base from the west and southwest, killing a few Japanese along the trails. That evening they returned to the bivouac area and prepared for an attack on the next day up the two long ridges.

The attack was three-pronged. Able Company was to go up the northern trail; Charlie up the southern. As the troops approached the summit, Baker Company was to drop off the trail behind Charlie Company and attack up the valley. Baker Company found the jungle so dense that it never made contact with the enemy.

Late in the afternoon the two companies approached the summit. The trails had been rough, the woods on either side had been dense, and the approach had been cautious. Occasionally the two companies caught glimpses of one another where there were breaks in the trees. Machine guns opened on both companies simultaneously. A machine gun crew on the little spur to the left of the Able Company ridge allowed a squad to pass and then opened fire just as another gun fired straight down the trail. Able Company kept flat along the ridge. Gradually two fire teams crept out and got the machine gunners to the left with hand grenades and BAR's. Charlie Company took out the machine gun to its rear by quick deployment and a rush—one officer was killed. Charlie Company pounded the crest with its mortars, and Able Company silenced the gun before it with its own machine guns.

Japanese riflemen fired from below, but their fire was ineffectual. As dusk drew on, both companies withdrew, carrying their wounded. It was nearly 2300 before they reached their bivouac area.

On the next day Able Company was detailed to act as ammunition and supply carriers to the other two companies and Major Thomas J. Myers led his battalion up the northern trail. Two battalions of artillery pounded the summit ahead of the battalion. The two companies found the bivouac area and killed a few Japanese. A company patrol farther along the trail ran into more machine guns, however. It was then that they discovered the camouflaged withdrawal trails, and for the rest of the day there was a running fight. Altogether the battalion killed approximately 100 Japanese. It was obvious, however, that the long eastern ridge could have been used by the Japanese to funnel soldiers into the northern part of the island.

On 26 April a patrol from the 4th Marines' bivouac area at Kawada observed a long column of Japanese soldiers on the trail ahead of them. They followed the column for some time unobserved to check on the direction and speed of the march. The next morning the 3rd Battalion set off to intercept the column. When they met the first organized fire, the battalion commander sent Love Company to seize the forward slope of a ridge beyond the enemy while King Company kept them pinned down. King Company then

pushed forward, and drove the enemy over the hill and on to rifles of Love Company. In all, the two companies killed 159 Japanese with only nine casualties of their own.

This action ended all organized resistance. The battalions bivouacked on Motobu and in the northern part of the island kept up constant patrols and maintained ambushes that killed or captured stragglers and prevented any gathering of bands.

On 3 May the Division began to move south to take the place of the 27th Infantry Division on the southern front.

After the conquest of the peninsula there remained three small islands off the coast still in possession of the Japanese. Though they might not be defended, they were still a potential threat. To avoid either a laborious amphibious action, or possible heavy casualties, the FMF Reconnaissance Battalion, which had been operating on the island since shortly after L-day, was called upon to make rubber boat reconnaissance by night of the two larger islands: Sesoko-shima, lying to the west of the peninsula, and Yagachi-shima, on the northern side. The latter island was part of the outer barrier of Unten-ko. When the reconnaissance showed no enemy, the battalion took over the islands in a night attack, moving out to them on armored amphibians. The Division Reconnaissance Company after careful reconnaissance took the smaller Kouri-shima by a daylight attack. This was the first time that armored amphibians had been used to transport troops in the attack, and to supply the covering fire from their guns. The method was to prove useful in the south.

The Special Action Report of the Division summarizes its achievements on Okinawa during phases I and II of the operation.

"During that period the Division had moved 84 miles, seized 436 square miles of enemy territory, counted over 2500 enemy bodies and captured 46 prisoners. Our losses during the period were 236 killed, 1061 wounded, and 7 missing. During the rapid advance of the Division from Yontan Airdrome to the northern tip of Okinawa, practically every type of maneuver was employed and all types of supply problems encountered. The successful execution of the mission assigned gives conclusive evidence that a Marine Division is capable of extended operations ashore."

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Footnote 5.

Below is the outline of information required by 2nd Lieutenant C. H. Whitey of his Reconnaissance Team. The outline prescribes not the method of training, but the end product of that training.

- I. Beach Analysis: Based on off-shore observation.
 - (1) Beach Proper
 - (2) Ground and vegetation immediately in rear of beach
 - (3) Artificial obstacles above high water mark
 - (4) Weapons and protective installations
- II. Approach to Beach Analysis: Based on report of UDT.
 - (1) Hydrographic
 - (a) Depth Lines
 - (b) Tide Range
 - (c) Surf Conditions
 - (d) Currents: (Directions and Force)
 - (2) Natural features under water
 - (a) Reef pattern and natural obstacles
 - (b) Natural channels
 - (c) Texture of bottom at landing point
 - (3) Artificial Obstacles below high water mark
 - (a) Anti-boat; Anti-personnel
 - (b) Mines
- III. Results of demolition work, and gunfire.
 - (1) Below high-water mark
 - (2) Above high-water mark
- IV. Summary of conditions affecting the landing, as planned.
 - (1) Approach to Beach:
 - (a) Lanes cleared
 - (b) Obstacles remaining:
 - (1) Natural
 - (2) Artificial
 - (c) Point of grounding of assault wave
 - (1) Boat
 - (2) Track Vehicles
 - (2) Beach conditions affecting landing:
 - (a) Natural obstacles remaining
 - (b) Artificial obstacles remaining
 - (c) Weapons and personnel installations remaining
 - (3) Terrain in rear of Beach Proper
 - (a) Corridors
 - (b) Exit for Infantry
 - (c) Exit for track vehicles
 - (d) Exit for trucks
 - (e) Natural concealment
 - (f) Distance off shore at which defilade, from the front, becomes effective.

Footnote 10.

During the Saipan Operation, Civil Affairs Officers handled 17,000 civilians. To perform this job they had to use a rifle company that had to be withdrawn from the lines, and half an MP company. Here, Civil Affairs demonstrated that the section was serving a useful tactical purpose; it removed the whole question of the care and protection of the civilian population from line and staff officers and enabled them to devote their whole energies to the pursuit of the war.

Upon their return to Pearl Harbor, the whole group of Civil Affairs Officers got together and made a recommendation to Lt. Gen. H. M. Smith that a battalion of about 2,000 men and officers be formed for Civil Affairs work and that this battalion be attached to FMF, Pacific, to be used as needed in operations.

By the time of Okinawa, the same allotment of men and officers to division was kept. In planning for the operation, Tenth Army had sought consultations with the Officer-in-Charge, Civil Affairs, FMF, Pacific, but little was accomplished. On Okinawa, Civil Affairs came under a joint Army-Navy group. Among other accomplishments, the Civil Affairs section discovered 1,500 men among its prisoners who were Japanese soldiers; it was a civilian from the camp who showed the 6th Marine Division the way to the cave of General Ushijima.

Footnote 11.

The functions of Corps are important but in actuality the performance of them is dictated by necessity and not by the principles set forth in the book. There is implicit in most considerations of a Corps the necessity for it to remain a tactical organization; in practice it is difficult if not impossible to separate tactical and administrative functions.

In preparation for the Okinawa Operation, FMF, Pac, had stripped Corps of all Corps troops and attached FMF, units: a Motor Transport Battalion, an MP Battalion, and a Medical Battalion. III Corps had only two organic units left, a Signal Battalion, certainly necessary for tactical direction, and an Engineering Battalion whose function was necessary but not strictly tactical. There were also attached four Amphibian Tractor Battalions from FMF, Pac. Such battalions had remained, however, since their organization a part of FMF, Pac, and there was no innovation in their present use.

The assumption by Corps of administrative duties began while the 6th Division was on Guadalcanal, and the 1st Division on the Russell Islands. The 6th Marine Division was getting its supplies through that section of the 4th Base Depot attached to it. The Base Depot Company with the 6th Division served as a useful intermediary between division and depot; it was in no sense a storage center. Corps ruled that all requisitions for supplies would have to pass through it for approval and information. Requests now went from division to Corps, back to division to the 4th Base Depot Company to the 4th Base Depot and back to division, a long and laborious process at best, an irritating but perhaps necessary process when supplies were not available or not approved. Later, the Forward Echelon, FMF, Pac, South Pacific, also insisted that all requisitions be cleared through it and another exasperating step was added. Yet it is difficult to see how Corps could allocate supplies without the necessary information.

Upon landing at Okinawa, Corps had immediately a variety of administrative duties to perform. The CB Battalion that had been working with the 6th Engineering Battalion upon Yontan Airfield was attached to Corps; the Engineering Battalion attached to Corps began almost immediately to take over the areas between the 6th Marine Division and the beaches; the MP Battalion became a necessary adjunct to the MP Company of the 6th Division which was inadequately mounted; and presently the Motor Battalion attached to Corps had to be used in its entirety sometimes with vehicles on loan to the Division, sometimes itself carrying supplies forward from the beaches.

Footnote 11. (Cont'd.)

After its establishment on the beach Corps took over the task of coordinating the handling of supplies, and for that purpose took over from the 6th Division its DUKW Company which it did not return till nearly the end of the operation.

In phases I and II, the tactical manipulation by Corps of the units under its command (besides its two divisions) was confined to its use of the FMF, Pac, Reconnaissance Battalion on island exploration and to use of 1/7 as a defensive measure in the area left behind by the 6th Division. Because of the rapid advance of Division and the lack of opposition in the early stages of the march the Medical Battalion of Corps was put to very little use; Division evacuated its wounded directly to hospital ships wherever possible.

Five thousand replacements had been provided for each division for the operation. Two thousand, five hundred of them were sent directly to the 6th Division while it was still at Guadalcanal and were attached to the Pioneer Battalion for loading and unloading. The second 2500 were sent directly from the States to Okinawa and arrived during the operation. Though they were attached administratively to Corps they were sent immediately upon arrival to the 6th Division.

After the commitment of the two divisions in the south in Phase III, the administrative duties of Corps again seemed to assume dominance. As a lower echelon of the Tenth Army, the tactical decisions of Corps were directed toward carrying out orders from Tenth Army.

Corps artillery, normally an integral part of Corps, was for the greater part of the operation under Tenth Army.

Footnote 12.

The sketch is a wholly stylized diagram of a typical Japanese defense system as it was found again and again in Northern Okinawa. Most frequently the Japanese had caves around the walls of the ravine between the two ravines, though the caves were rather for shelter and storage than for defense. They defended the main ridge by setting up machine guns on both noses to cover approach trails with protecting riflemen before and behind them, by defensive lines on the ridge itself, and by mortar positions on the reverse slope.

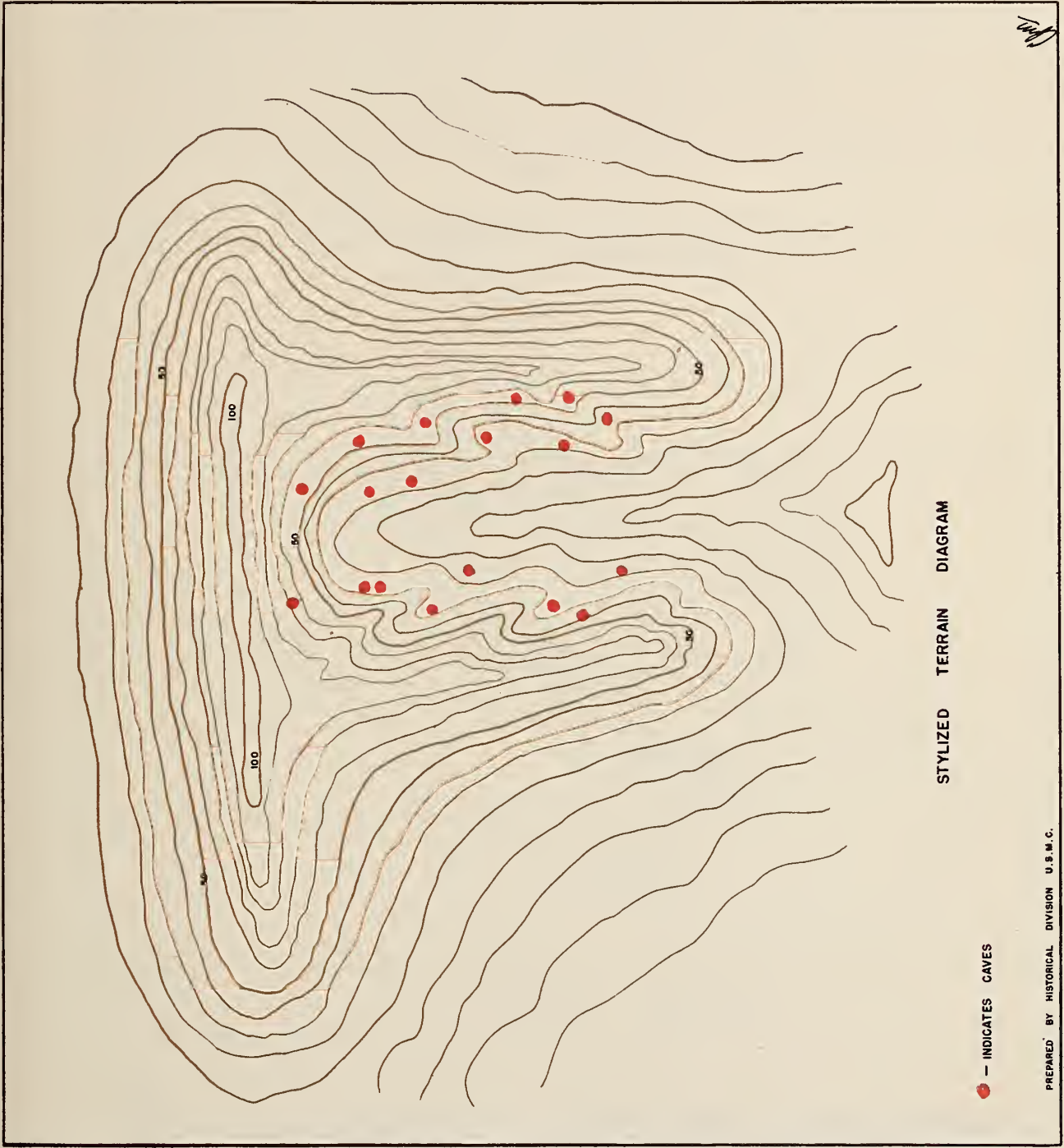
These positions were taken in a variety of ways: 1. by sending a force clean around to the flank and up on to the ridge while a holding force engaged the enemy below; 2. by assaulting one nose only while a second platoon or company held at the foot of the other; 3. by assaulting both noses simultaneously.

Both 3/4 and 1/4 suffered heavy casualties on L plus 2 in the foothills of the Yontan ridge from such a position; 2/4 ran into just such a position twice as it approached Yae-take; 1/22 in its attack on Taniyo-take had to make its attack up two such ridges.

PATROLS OF 22ND MARINES

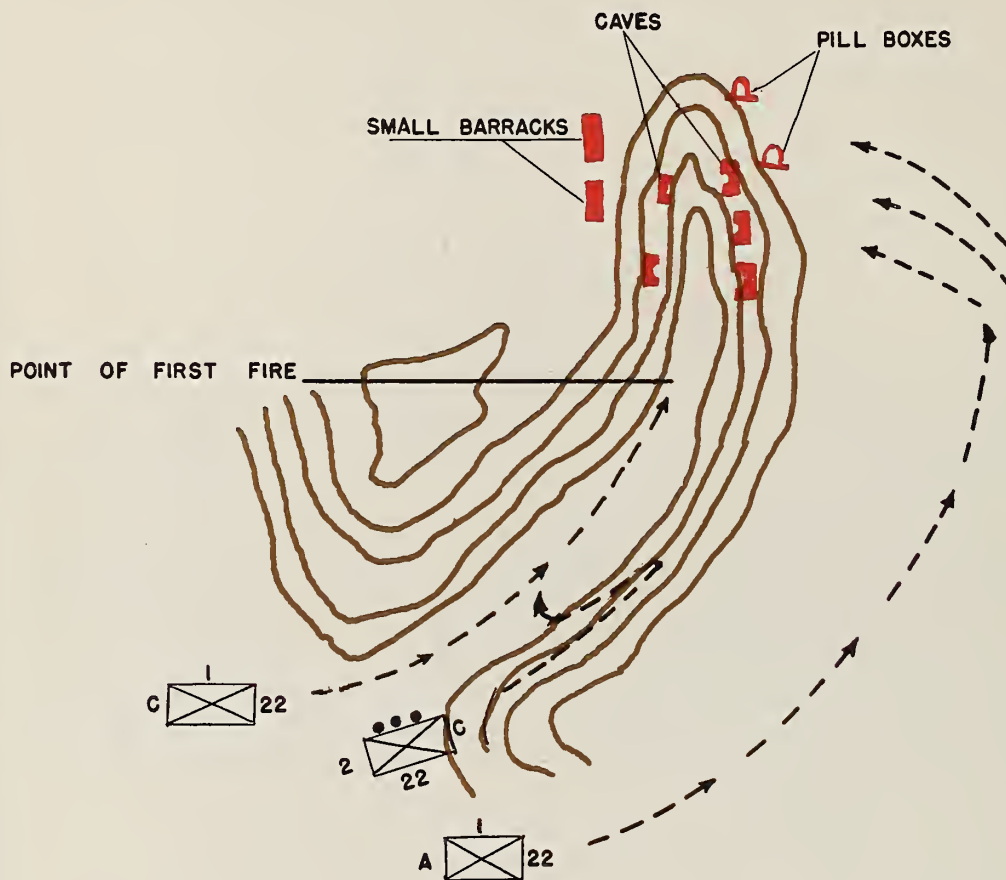
Footnote 22.

On 16 April, Charlie Company on patrol in the region north of Awa entered a long draw which bent sharply to the west, some 900 yards from its entrance. The 3rd platoon led the company into the draw, the 2nd platoon started to patrol the high covering hills to the east of the draw. This platoon retraced its steps and came up with the rest of the company before it entered the upper portion of the ravine; the territory which they had attempted to patrol had been too difficult for them to penetrate. As the 3rd platoon rounded the curve of the draw, it ran into heavy machine gun fire, and received 8 casualties, two of them killed. The company withdrew. Able Company ordered to the assistance of Charlie Company swung well around to the east and up to the end of the ravine. With its mortars it succeeded in silencing the Japanese fire. The Japanese, however, retreated with few casualties. The position was a small bivouac area with a few protective emplacements thrown about it.



— INDICATES CAVES

STYLIZED TERRAIN DIAGRAM



PATROL ACTION

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 10

PATROLS OF 22ND MARINES

Footnote 22.

In the region north of Awa on 17 April, Able Company marched up a narrow valley to a point at its head where three trails joined. At the point where the three trails joined, Able Company set up an ambush in the expectation of catching any enemy units that tried to retreat before Charlie Company that was circling north of them. The dense undergrowth on both sides of the trail prevented the use of riflemen along the trail; so a single machine gun was set up pointing northeast up the trail.

After a wait of two hours an enemy scout moved down the trail and passed up the trail that led to the northwest. Behind him came a squad of Japanese. The machine gunner killed five of the squad at his first burst, but the remaining Japanese got safely away.

(Information on these patrols was gained from interviews that PFC Frank M. Matthews, an Intelligence Scout with G-2, had with the units concerned.)

PATROLS OF 22ND MARINES

Footnote 22.

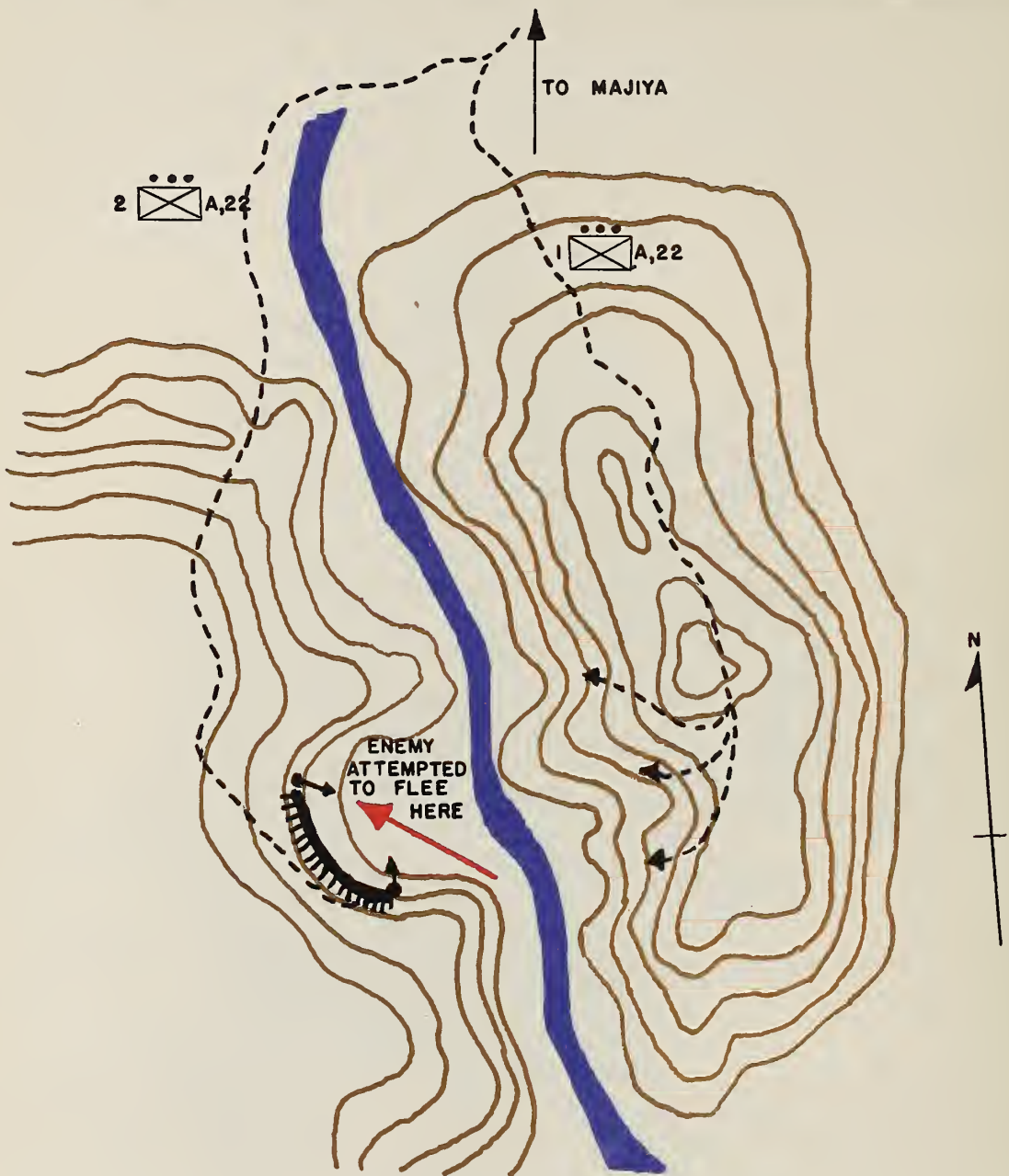
On 11 April, two platoons of Able Company were patrolling inland, working along the line of hills along one side of a small stream that ran down from the interior toward Mijiya. The first platoon met rifle fire from a small group of Japanese who retreated before them and attempted to escape by climbing down the steep hills toward the stream. The 2nd platoon, however, swung around onto the slopes of the hills on the other side, set up its machine guns and killed 38 Japanese. The maneuver was successful because the platoons were always in communication. The diagram sufficiently explains the action. This is in miniature a type of action that was used successfully against far greater numbers of the enemy. It is also a type of maneuver which could be exceedingly dangerous if there were expectant enemies on the far side of the stream.



AMBUSH

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.
MAP NO. 11

John



22-ND MARINE PATROLS

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 12

John

23. NEWS OF NEWS, No. 1, is an exact copy of a sheet discovered in an abandoned cave north of Awa by a patrol of 1/22 on 17 April. The sheets were produced on a gelatin-type duplicating machine.

NEWS OF NEWS

NO. 1

Saturday, April 14

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT DIED A SUDDEN DEATH

To men of the 6th Marine Division! We take it a great honor to speak to you for the first time.

We are awfully sorry to learn from the U. P. telegraph that the life of President Roosevelt has suddenly come to its end at 3:30 P. M. on April 12. It seems to be an incredible story in spite of its actual evidence.

Men of the 6th Marine Division! Particularly, men of the 15th and 29th Marine and 3rd Amphibian Corps! We express our hearty regret with you all over the death of the late President. What do you think was the true cause of the late President's death? A miserable defeat experienced by the U. S. forces in the sea around the islands of Okinawa! Were this not the direct cause leading him to death, we could be quite relieved.

We do not think that the majority of you have an exact knowledge of the present operations being carried out by the U. S. forces, although a very few number of you must have got a glympse of the accurate situation.

An exceedingly great number of picked aircrafts-carriers, battle-ships, cruisers and destroyers held on her course to and near the sea of Okinawa in order to protect you and carry out operations in concert with you. The 90% of them have already been sunk and destroyed by Japanese Special Fighting Bodies, sea and air. In this way a grand "U. S. Sea Bottom Fleet" numbering 500 has been brought into existence around this little island.

Once you have seen a "lizard" twitching about with its tail cut off, we suppose this state of lizard is likened to you. Even a drop of blood can be never expected from its own heart. As a result an apopletic stroke comes to attack.

It is sort of vice however to presume upon other's unhappiness. This is why we want to write nothing further.

It is time now for you, sagacicus and pradent, however, to look over the whole situations of the present war and try to catch a chance for reflection!!

ARMY INFORMATION BUREAU, OKINAWA

24. Listed below is an analysis of Colonel Udo's force. The total of troops tallies fairly closely with the number destroyed on the Motobu Peninsula. Okinawan guerrilla groups are not, however, included. They should number several hundred.
 From: Appendix Able, to Annex C, Special Action Report, Phases I and II Okinawa Operation, 29th Marines.

ORDER OF BATTLE:

UDO Force (Colonel Takehiko Udo, Commanding)

2nd Bn, 2nd Inf, Unit: 44th IMB
 (Major Sato, Commanding)

Headquarters

4th Company

6th Company

2nd MG Company

AT Unit

500 Off. and Enl.

1st Btry. 100th 2nd Arty Bn.

9th Naval Gun Unit

100 Off. and Enl.

33rd Midget Sub Unit

27th Torpedo Boat Unit

IMOTO TAI (Naval Labor Unit)

YAMAME TAI (Naval Labor Unit)

300 Off. and Enl.

10th Plat. 1st Co., 26th Ship Engrs.

55 Off. and Enl.

1st GOKYOTAI (Veterans Unit)

2nd GOKYOTAI (Veterans Unit)

3rd YUKEKITAI (Commando Unit)

4th YUGEKITAI (Commando Unit)

200 Off. and Enl.

225 Special Guard Company

Misc. Special Service Troops

66 Off. and Enl.

Regtl. Gun Unit (2-75 mm guns)

60 Off. and Enl.

1,281 Off. and Enl.



CHAPTER II

The Battle for Naha

CHAPTER II

THE BATTLE FOR NAHA

After completing the conquest of Motobu Peninsula, the various regiments of the Division settled into their assigned bivouac area: the battalions of the 29th were placed around the circumference of the Motobu Peninsula; the 4th Marines and their Regimental CP were on the far side of the island gathered along a little valley by a clear stream. The battalions of the 22nd were all along the western coast from Taira onto the tip. They were still patrolling, but the patrolling was not arduous—a company went out along the trails every three days. There was some excitement on these patrols, and twice there were skirmishes that grew into battles—these have already been described.

It was an uneasy time, however. The Command Post and the bivouac areas began to gather about them the things that seems to make a camp permanent: furniture of sorts, all the small things that men make or acquire to secure conveniences, and yet it was becoming plain that the Division would soon be sent to help the Army in the South. Men felt a strong resentment that they should have to be committed again when they had had a lucky break, but they began the curious and interesting process of preparing themselves to go into battle. This was the first of several times thereafter that they had to go through this particular preparation. It was one of the things that made the southern phase of the Okinawa operation difficult for the men of the 6th Marine Division.

Ordinarily the terrible time for men approaching an amphibious operation is the day or so before the landing when men's nerves tighten no matter what they do, no matter how phlegmatic the men may be. Once on the beach, however, though there is always the fear of death or wounds, the men turn numb; the sights and sounds of battle become usual and accepted. With the end of the operation comes lethargy, a physical weariness, and at the same time an intense quiet enjoyment of everything about one.

Now to go directly from this state of awareness of living, from this unspoken hope that this may be the last time that one will have to undergo an operation, into battle requires a tremendous wrench. A man has to argue with himself; he has to discount to himself his chances of being killed or wounded, and finally, tired of his own internal wrangling, he has to adopt impatiently a sort of fatalism.

Ordinarily the Marine has to go through this period of inner struggle only once; even though he is withdrawn to a reserve position during the operation he knows that he is soon to be committed again; he can rest or sleep or restore himself in reserve without ever letting go of the final decision that he made before landing. In southern Okinawa the operation was not continuous: there was a distinct series of phases: the battle for Sugar Loaf, the drive through Naha, the conquest of Oroku, the final assault on the ridges of the Ara-Saki Peninsula. As each of these separate battles drew to an end, the men took heart and the wishful rumor grew that we would "secure" when we had finished this phase. Each time the men "let go" and each time they were committed, they again girded themselves. Perhaps the most painful time of all was the period after the conquest of the Oroku Peninsula. Men were bivouacked along the southern shore of the peninsula and in the hills to the north of the airfield. Men had lined their fox-holes, had hung out jungle hammocks where they could; they rested in the shade of trees and talked quietly and they bathed eagerly and frequently in a tidal stream and from a few clear cool wells. Then one night great sides of frozen beef were distributed to

companies, and boxes of apples. The men roasted and ate the meat over fires but they were uneasy, and stomachs shrunken on C rations could take pitifully little of the steaks. Steak is inevitably the sign of approaching combat—a traditional formula. When there were fresh eggs for breakfast the men were sure, downcast, and still hopeful. At 1000 the orders came for the march south.

By the first of May the 1st Marine Division had been committed and men followed with a good deal of interest the news of battle; then one morning the advance echelon of the 27th Infantry Division came north. Their reception was not too cordial. The Marines were somewhat resentful; they felt that the 27th was getting out of a nasty job. There were some incidents¹ but the time when the two divisions were in contact was brief. By 2 May the 6th Marine Division was moving south to an assembly area well to the rear of the lines. Here for a brief time there was another pause within the sound of distant guns. At night there were flashes along the horizon and the faraway melancholy glow of star-shells. It was at this time that the General published to all hands his final adjuration.

046/165

6th Mar Div
In the field
6 May 1945

RESTRICTED

Training 0

No. 23-45

COMBAT ON OKINAWA

1. The battle in southern OKINAWA is different from anything this Division has encountered in the operation thus far:—

a. The enemy has a great deal of artillery and is using it far more intelligently than in any operation to date.

b. The enemy has plenty of ammunition and isn't afraid to use it if he sees a target.

c. The enemy has excellent observation and takes every opportunity to watch what our troops are doing.

d. The enemy has sown anti-tank and anti-personnel mines in every conceivable locality.

e. The enemy is aggressive and is willing to counterattack by every available means, land or water.

f. The enemy has a strong defensive line; one which cannot be breached by simple frontal attack, without heavy losses.

g. The enemy has well concealed machine gun positions in caves and tombs in every hill. Flame-throwers and demolitions are the best means of overcoming them.

2. However in one most important respect the battle in southern OKINAWA is identical with every operation in the Pacific War. That is the fact that Japs are still inferior to Marines in every detail;—in training, equipment, intelligence, and in courageous determination.

3. To put the facts discussed above to our own good use, every officer and man in

¹See note at end of chapter.



Yontan Airfield

RESTRICTED

Training 0 No. 23-45 (Cont'd.)

the Division will keep the following points in mind, and will stress their importance to his subordinates:

a. Keep your head down. Even though well behind the front line take advantage of all possible cover. Keep off the skyline.

b. Camouflage yourself and your equipment with every means at your disposal.

c. If you are a unit commander,—whether it be a squad or battalion,—maneuver. Don't try to outslug the Jap;—outflank him.

d. Dig in. Even the most accurate German artillery holds no fears for a man in an adequate foxhole;—and the Japs aren't as good as the Germans.

e. Keep driving — Your enemy can't think as fast as you can, and he is no match for a determined aggressive Marine, who has confidence in himself and his weapon.

4. The foregoing Training Order will be read to troops on two separate occasions by infantry platoon leaders and by commanders of similiar sized units in other elements of the Division.

BY COMMAND OF MAJ GEN SHEPHERD:

J. C. McQueen

Col, USMC

CofS

Distribution: Special

Official:

/s/ V. H. KRULAK

V. H. KRULAK

LtCol, USMC

G-3

The reference to the artillery was pointed and yet not one of the readers paid much attention to what was going to be one of the worst things of the coming operation. It was curious; in one sense, the Marines had been under as heavy and as fierce artillery fire as any other group in this war, and yet it was artillery fire that never persisted very long. For example, at Saipan it was very heavy in volume for three days after the landing. The Special Action Reports of operations had mentioned monotonously that the Japanese failed to mass their fires; that their artillery fire was ineffective. From the time they entered the lines on 8 May to near the end of the operation on 21 June, the Marines were to be under constant bombardment. It was this bombardment which was going to make the front lines safer sometimes than the battalion CP's and to enforce a totally different way of administering all the echelons from company to regiment. Artillery fire took a heavy toll of battalion commanders, of troops marching to the front lines; it caused casualties among the ranks of troops resting in reserve; it made rest areas untenable; it made it impossible for Division to hold troops in ready reserve and at the same time to keep them safe.

Before the 6th Marine Division came south, the 1st Marine Division had relieved an Army division on the line and pushed forward, flanking one hill mass that had been holding up progress in the centre of the line, Hill 187, and driving forward till it came to the high bluffs above Asa-Kawa, the river which on the coast acted almost as a moat before the enemy's defensive line. Here the coast widened above Naha as the 1st Marine Division went south along the rocky ridge it was on, it left a great area to its right uncovered; it was here that the 6th Marine Division was first committed on a regimental front, that of the 22nd Marines. On 8 May the 22nd Marines relieved the 7th Marines in their positions along the bluff; on the morning of the tenth they made their first attack across the river. This bluff was a good place from which to observe the first great battlefield of the 6th Marine Division in Southern Okinawa. Like most battlefields before or after the battle it was an exceedingly peaceful and beautiful scene under the spring afternoon sun. There was no sign of human life in the green fields below. Ridges looked a little bleak where shell fire had fallen, but there were still plenty of trees. Perhaps the only direct sign that war had come was the scorched and ruined bulk of a sugar factory by the river, and the black open rectangles of burned houses just beyond. And just at the spectator's feet the Asa River wound down to the sea under a bridge that had obviously been destroyed.

The whole area, roughly semicircular, was dominated by high ground but from the bluff it did not seem difficult terrain to fight over. There were several ridges that offered defiladed approaches; it did not appear probable that the Japanese General would defend all the high ground with equal vehemence. He had shown himself a canny judge of terrain; he would not commit many of his troops to fight anything more than a delaying action on a ridge which was backed by the sea or on one that stood raised above a river which could effectively cut off retreat. Far to the left there were several isolated hills, but they did not appear formidable. One could give the reader a simplified picture of the whole territory by saying that on the bluff, he was standing above the broken half of a saucer with the broken edge of the saucer against his feet. From the hollow at his feet the ground rose gently to the horizon some two thousand yards away. On the right and left, long ridges curved to meet one another. The whole area was, in fact, one large drainage basin for the Asa River. To the west the stripped coral ridges formed a barrier to the sea; to the south a long clay ridge barred the way down to Naha; to the southeast there was a group of grassy hills set close together that formed the height of land between the Asa River basin and the Asato River corridor. At the east there rose the rough folds of Wana ridge, the bastions of the inland mountain ridges. It was down this ridge that

the 1st Marine Division was driving. Once the rim of the saucer was dominated by the 6th Marine Division, we had a secure supply line, a way south into Naha and good observation over it. Intelligence had made plain by now, however, that the two Marine Divisions had penetrated to the main line of Japanese resistance; they were facing an anchor end of that line at Shuri. Just how General Ushijima planned to defend this comparatively open flank was not yet entirely clear. It was, however, quite obvious that he would not allow us to by-pass Shuri.

Already he had shown that he had plenty of artillery in and behind Shuri. He was pumping high velocity eight inch shells from two guns into the roads leading to and past Machinato Airfield; he was perfectly registered on the ridge that the 22nd Marines had taken over; he could see the supply routes they were using and was taking under fire the amtracs bringing up rations, water, and ammunition. The battalion CP's were in defilade behind the bluff near the sea or around and in little hill masses of coral which the thrifty Okinawans had used for their tombs. Every evening about 1700, and early every morning the Japanese artilleryman gave these little hills, the ridge, and the roads a thorough and efficient pounding. Occasionally he shot at targets of opportunity during the day. One could never be sure; carelessness usually drew fire, and the crews of the tanks and the M7's² learned very early that the sight of a tank or armored vehicle above the sky line would drive him to a frenzy of shooting.

On the front lines where the men were dug in there was a constant slow stream of casualties going to the rear. At the Battalion CP's or among the companies in reserve a man was wounded or killed less frequently, but the shells fell often enough so that no one could feel safe.

The boundaries between the 1st Marine Division and the 6th Marine Division had been assigned by Corps. There seems to have been some hesitation, however, on the mission of the 6th Marine Division and on the area in which it was to be committed. There was early discussion apparently on the advisability of sending in the 6th Division on the left of the 1st. Later after the 6th Division was committed on the right flank, orders from Corps seemed to indicate that the 6th Division was to execute a holding attack while the 1st Division pressed on the left. Throughout the whole first part of the battle for Naha, emphasis is placed on the left, and orders reiterate the need for keeping the main attack going on the left.

Theoretically, the position of the Corps was correct: once the 1st Marine Division had taken the high ground before Shuri, the 6th Division could have moved forward to the hills above Naha without coming under artillery fire from the heights to the east. Actually, of course, the 6th Marine Division found the opposition to its immediate front fairly weak and was able to reach the hills above Naha in two days, while the 1st Marine Division was still committed to driving ahead in frontal assault against high ridges with almost no roads for supplies and no terrain over which tanks could maneuver. Corps does not indicate in its orders, the time at which the weight of the attack was shifted from left to right, and the 6th Marine Division given the burden of the attack which it had automatically assumed.

The first problem facing the regiment was to reconnoiter the ground. How were the battalions to get across the river; how were they to deploy after they got across?

On the morning of the 9th patrols from King and Love Companies³ had gone across the river at daybreak near the mouth to see whether the bottom would support tanks

²M7: Model No. of the tank destroyer mounting the 105mm howitzer, employed by Regimental Weapons Companies.

³King and Love are the equivalents in the military phonetic alphabet of K and L. It is not strictly correct to use these terms in formal writing but in this section the author has employed them because they are in constant colloquial use. A Marine will always call his company by its phonetic title.

or tracked vehicles. It could not. Like most of the tidal rivers in Okinawa the stream was sluggish and shallow and dropped its burden of silt as soon as the mouth widened toward the sea. Later on in the morning combat patrols probed the other side of the river and drew fire.

Not far from the river mouth the stream narrows and becomes easily fordable. Here patrols from Easy and George Companies went across. Easy Company to their left found nothing; George Company got into a country of curious hills that were heavily garrisoned, and after a vigorous firefight withdrew. The countryside which looked not too difficult to fight over turned out to be strongly defended from sunken roads, lined with tombs, and on little hills only a few feet high that were moated with rice paddies and deep drainage ditches. Below the ridge that separates the center of the drainage basin was a plateau, broken down by the queer ways of erosion into what were essentially little blocks of ground irregularly shaped. Roads followed the erosion channels. The steep banks that ran along the roads had been made more difficult by the series of tombs that had been built into them. As the companies of 2/22 moved into this territory they found that they were progressing over a constant series of irregular cross compartments. They could not use the roads of the draws because of fires from the higher ground; they could not get at the higher ground without dropping into the draws.

Sometime a good geologist should explain the terrain in some of these Pacific Islands. Usually as at Okinawa the basic rock is coral; sometimes the coral has been compounded in great heat or pressure to a sort of limestone. In either case the coral forms the bony framework. Here and there either because of erosion or upheaval long ridges rise, bare and great and contorted. Aside from the coral there seems to be very little sedimentary rock; the soil is a fine red clay—two exceptions were two of the hills that were to be so fiercely fought for in this valley. In a climate where there is no frost, in a region where there are long periods of torrential rainfall, erosion does unusual things as here, where it had cut to pieces a little plain, yet left it to the distant observer as green and as gently rolling as a prairie.

The general plan of attack for the regiment as it evolved from this preliminary reconnaissance was complicated. Since the ridge on which the 1st Marine Division was driving was almost directly north and south, there was bound to be divergence between the 22nd Marines and the 1st Marine Division. The plan of attack was to send two companies of the 2nd Battalion across the Asa and up into the high ground where they could establish a strong point to protect the left flank of the advance. As the regiment went forward on the right, George Company could move forward with it, pivoting toward the left to face outward toward Shuri. On the right 3/22 would attack the long ridge that dominated its right flank. In the center the 1/22 could push or hold as need arose. The plan of attack envisaged three separate units each maneuvering in its own zone of action, yet each dependent on the other. The movement was not in a line, as it had been on smaller Pacific islands; it was not always important that the units maintain physical contact. It could be said that both attack and defense proceeded by taking or defending isolated but mutually supporting strongpoints. Whether the German system of strongpoints—the so-called hedgehog—had been adapted to suit the peculiar terrain features of Okinawa is a question. Certainly the Japanese system of defense had many things in common with it.

And now in the early morning of the 10th of May the battalions were ready to go. The engineers had completed a foot-bridge. The time of attack had finally been settled at 0300. Behind the battalions on the ridge above the river's mouth the Regimental Weapons Company had set up its 37's and its M7's to protect the advance and give direct support. At this moment the battalions were nearly at full strength; three tremendous instruments. The men were well trained, perhaps as good as the Marine Corps had,

veterans most of them of at least two operations. The men at this moment who controlled them were not destined to have that control for long.

Colonel Horatio C. Woodhouse commanded the 2nd Battalion. He had taken it over in the middle of the Guam operation and had had it ever since. In a fortnight he was to be killed on Telegraph Hill. His executive officer was Major Henry A. Courtney, Jr. He was continually moving with the companies, and was now suffering from a slight wound he had received in an advanced CP. He had five days more to live. Shortly after midnight on the 14th a mortar shell would fall by him on the dark summit of Sugar Loaf.

Major Thomas J. Myers had the 1st Battalion. He was to die on the morning of the 15th from the concussion of an eight inch shell that would land near him.

Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm "O" Donohoo was the commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion. He had come overseas for the second time on 16 November 1944 and had taken the battalion through its training period. In the northern part of Okinawa his executive officer, Major Bird had been killed. Colonel Donohoo was to be wounded the evening of the 16th, when an imperturbable intelligence scout recorded the last events of the day:

1910 Shells falling region of CP.

1918 Shells now falling directly in CP.

1934 Blizzard 6 wounded.

1940 Shells stopped falling.

1945 Blizzard 6 removed to CP by Lieutenant Holt and 1st Sergeant Stevens.

1/22 was to have all three of its Company Commanders wounded within five days; the 2/22 was to lose two of its three Company Commanders around Sugar Loaf; and 3/22 was soon to have run through its three captains. Neither experience nor training saved veterans of Samoa, the lesser Marshalls, Eniwetok, Guam, from deaths or wounds. It is probable, however, that only men so trained could have done what they did in the next month.

A captured Japanese Colonel had talked scornfully of the American Army: it had, he said, chosen to win a cheap victory by holding its infantry back and employing the full might of its material superiority. Nothing could be farther from the truth of what the Marines did in this little semicircle of hills, where without any great superiority in numbers they met the best that Japan had in heavily fortified positions and took them by hand to hand fighting, where infantry charged against automatic weapons firing from caves, and sealed the caves and killed the gunners.⁴

King Company started moving across the foot-bridge at 0300, Item Company followed, and behind it came Able Company. As the last man of Able Company got across the bridge, there was an explosion and a great hole was blown in the center of the structure. A Japanese suicide crew had succeeded in placing their charges. There is a mysterious and unverified story about this crossing. As the men of the last company went forward silently and cautiously in column they glimpsed a column of Japanese coming toward them. The Marines had strict orders not to fire; it was obvious that the Japanese were under the same restriction. The columns approached one another, wavered slightly, and went on their ways. Some of the Japanese supposedly got across the river under the silent noses of the howitzers of the Armored Amphibians on the farther bank and drifted inland toward the Divisional CP where several were killed later on.

King Company turned right after crossing and filed along the seawall to await dawn; Item Company drove left to the road to give flanking support, and Able Company clung near the river to serve as active reserve. As daylight broke, King Company came under heavy fire, and Item Company could not move forward in its proposed flanking action,

⁴See notes at end of chapter.

but gradually the heavy volume of fire from the M7's and the 37's on the bluff to the north began to take effect and slowly the two companies crept up the ridge. The 37's at this time were being employed almost like high-powered sniper rifles to fire into caves and MG emplacements. King Company went directly up the terraces in front of it, Item Company swung to its left to flank the hill. Later on in the morning Love Company came across the estuary in amtracs, but no one of the three companies got very far on this first day. They were under incessant fire; for this day they had no commanding ground upon which to rely. As they moved out into the open, they came under fire from three directions: the ridge along the sea, the high ground to their front, the isolated coral mound to their left. This mound was in the zone of action of 1/22.

Able Company waited on high ground just south of the river; Charlie Company came across on their heels, dashed across the open ground that led from the sugar factory to the hill, and took positions on Able Company's right flank. Captain Warren F. Lloyd crept forward to the edge of the ruined village. From his position he could see the coral mound a little to his left and about 500 yards away. He called up the platoon leader of his 2nd platoon, Lieutenant W. G. Loftis, and told him to take it. At its west end the bare naked coral of the ridge breaks down and there is a low grassy extension faced with tombs. This low nub could be approached from the west in defilade, and once taken would be an excellent place to set up machine guns to cover a further advance. Loftis sent one squad far to the right to swing to the forward slope of the hill and then up; he led another directly from the village toward the nub, and the third in a swing to the left. The first two squads by careful maneuvering got to and assembled on the low nose without casualties. The third squad lost four men in the attempt. Lieutenant Steinberg brought up the first platoon in support of Loftis and tried to throw his line of men from the nose to the summit of the hill. As soon as they moved into the open they came under fire from two pillboxes. Lieutenant Loftis took a squad, managed to creep up along the forward slope of the hill till he could reach them with flame-throwers. So far his task had not been difficult; he had had no indication that the hill was heavily garrisoned or that it was lined with caves. He pushed on toward the summit, found a fairly level place just below it and set up his guns to cover the advance of the 1st platoon. He was just another good lieutenant operating according to the book. He sent two scouts out to get to the summit and protect his rear and saw them both shot through the head. Without warning some twenty or thirty Japanese soldiers appeared behind the boulders and rocks of the crest and began firing at short range. He managed to get his men in some sort of defilade, but he could move neither up nor down; a runner he sent out to get word to Captain Lloyd was shot as he tried to cross from the ridge to the western nose. He himself made the next attempt. As he came into the open, a knee mortar shell dropped so near him that it ripped the pack from his back and knocked him unconscious. When he finally reached Captain Lloyd, he was assigned the third platoon as support but the whole effect of the fire was only sufficient to release his trapped men. The company got no farther that day, but dug in for the night with one flank reaching back toward Able Company and with the other linked to Baker Company.

On the right of the regiment's zone of action George Company held a hill and a wood; they could look down onto the draw in which the other two battalions were fighting. All day long a battery of 4.2's protected their left flank and dropped their heavy shells into the village that lay in the valley to their left and up along the roads that led down from the ridge in front.

As darkness fell the position of the regiment was bad. They had in effect made an amphibious landing and established a beachhead. Unlike the ordinary Combat Team, however, they had none of their supporting weapons with them save for a battery of 37's that had been rafted across in amtracs. The tanks were still firing ineffectually from the

other bank where they were under constant artillery fire. On the regiment's left flank two companies, Easy and George, faced to the left toward an unknown number of enemy; in the center Charlie Company clung to the little knob it had won. It was facing, across a gap of some 50 yards, more men than it numbered. On the extreme right three companies of the 3rd Battalion were dug in in exposed positions that were dominated by the high ground.

That night the engineers laid a Bailey bridge across the river which was ready for crossing by 1000 the next morning. Our attacks had started before this, but now they received additional impetus of tanks. There were two Japanese positions blocking our way. One was in the ridge to the right of the 3/22; the other was the coral ridge before which Charlie Company was now assembled. Both fell during the day, and by their fall opened the way to the bluffs above Naha for 3/22 and to the high ridge above the Asato to 1/22.

Captain Lloyd's plan for taking Charlie Ridge was to send the 2nd platoon around on to the forward slope,⁵ to take the 3rd platoon himself across the north face of the hill, and to send the 1st platoon directly up the long western slope. During the wait for the tanks the company had kept tomb positions and caves under fire, and from his CP near the village Captain Lloyd had directed the fire of the 37's. The intense bursts of fire from AT guns and machine guns were sufficiently well directed so that the 37's could do no more than poke their muzzles above defilade and so fire. Early in the afternoon the attacks started, Captain Lloyd leading his men behind the tanks across the grassy fields to the north. As they reached the eastern nose of the hill, the fire grew more intense and the tanks could not silence it. Nonetheless Captain Lloyd took one squad up to the summit in a reckless assault. All the men with him were killed or wounded except one man carrying a flame-thrower. Lloyd got his wounded out and took stock of the situation. The two other platoons had done no better, and had suffered heavy casualties. Captain Lloyd took his company back to defilade in the edge of the village and began to reorganize. Later that afternoon word came from Division that the ridge must be taken that day.

The battalion commander called Naval Gunfire from the **USS ANNAPOLIS** down on the hill and artillery fired on the reverse slope. The naval shells broke loose great blocks of coral from the top and rolled them down the steep face, but later investigation showed that even this intense shelling had not particularly damaged the interior caves. An observer on the ridge above the Asa-Kawa had watched this first attack through high-powered glasses and could see with a kind of shocked horror a complete picture of the action. As the men and tanks drew near the base of the hill, he said he could see Japanese gather at the mouths of caves, and that one would turn and grin at another before he fired his rifle. In other words they were on this second day still supremely confident.

At 1615 Lloyd made his last and successful attack. His three platoons got to the top and stayed there. Luckily there was little fire from other ridges on the hill. At 1720 the journal of the 1st Battalion records a laconic message from Major Myers to his Operations Officer, Major Kurdziel: Charlie Company at 7673 Able 1, Able 4.

The Company was down to approximately 80 men by now. Before the last attack the 2nd and 3rd platoons had been combined. For the night the best they could do was to set up a few strongholds along the crest and on the forward slope. All night long Japanese from their reverse slope tried to regain the summit; they drove all of the Charlie Company men back to the top, but they could not throw them off.

For the next two days the company was engaged in blowing caves, in pouring

⁵The terms *reverse slope* and *forward slope* are frequently confused in usage. The forward slope from the Marines' point of view was the slope of the hill away from them; that is, the slope on which the Japanese had built their reverse slope defense.

gasoline down ventilator shafts, and in killing the little bands of Japanese that still sallied forth. They had broken a way to Naha, however, and on 12 May, Baker and Able Companies pushed by the hill and up into the village on the high ground above the town.

During the day of 11 May, 3/22 had taken a high ridge on the coast which had blocked its advance and then pushed on to the high bluffs at the mouth of the Asato River.

The 6th Marine Division now held high ground over the city of Naha; it commanded a good paved road over which supplies could be run, but it could not advance further until the high ground on its left flank had been secured. The unexpectedness or the celerity of the attack had apparently caught the enemy off balance; we had swept past his fixed defenses before he could send in reinforcements. A copy of an Okinawan newspaper published at about this time later fell into the hands of the 6th Marine Division Intelligence Section. "There has come into the enemy's lines", the editorial said wryly, "a new division which is like a tiger cub."⁶ The tribute was justified.

For possibly a day the two battalions enjoyed a sort of respite in their advanced positions. In the lull General Shepherd could bring down General Buckner to the lone pine tree at the Observation Post and up to the water reservoir where they could watch with their field glasses an advance of tanks on a grassy ridge to the south or see patrols from the battalions moving among the shattered houses of the suburb below them. Beyond the grassy ridge was another hill which had not yet a name. But at 8:00 o'clock that evening, 12 May 1945, Colonel Woodhouse had sent in a grim and dispassionate series of notes to Regiment:

Got as far as 7672 George. Took hill but casualties were so heavy that George could not hold it.

Estimate about 75 men left in George Company including Headquarters platoon.

7672 George is tunneled and caved. Lost three tanks in that area. All wounded were evacuated. 3-4 dead were left behind.

This was the beginning of the battle for Sugar Loaf, the hill named by Colonel Woodhouse on 14 May when he briefed his company commanders.

And now the situation was curious. On the left flank of the regiments the companies were engaged in a furious battle that was to last from the 13th to the 21st. On the right flank two battalions were apparently sitting on their goal. Naha lay below them, but they could not exploit what they had won. The orders of 1/22 and 3/22 were to explore the triangle of ruined houses below them along the Asato River and drive out the Japanese. On the 12th and on the 13th the battalions sent out patrols accompanied by tanks. The tanks were held up helpless in the narrow streets, and the men went forward. Baker Company of 1/22 ran into a vigilant little garrison on the hill below the reservoir and wiped it out; they killed the Nambu gunner, shot three riflemen who were protecting him and fired their bazookas into the houses below where they could see Japanese running from house to house. A series of tombs along the hillside turned out to be a series of interconnecting caves. As the men threw in demolition charges they heard the pop of grenades inside.

But the patrols in the village were ineffectual. It was obvious that the Japanese had a covered route of approaches down the Asato River and could feed in reinforcements or withdraw them as they chose.

⁶Though this statement is taken from a periodic report of the G-2 section, no copy of the paper was seen by this writer, and the term "newspaper" seems a curious one to be used at this period of the attack. Naha by this time was completely flattened and it is difficult to see how any newspaper as we know it could have been published or circulated at this time.

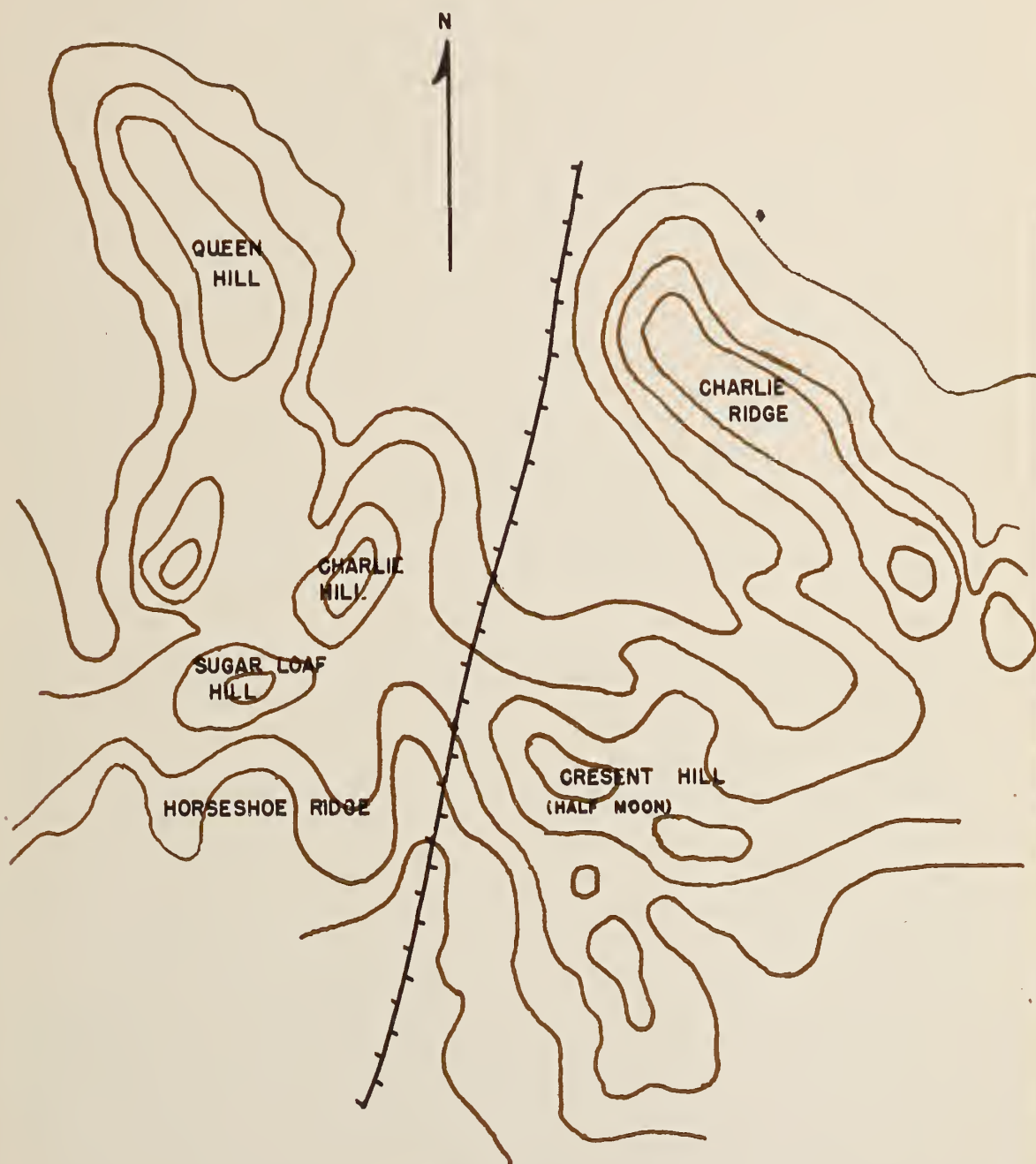


FIGURE 1

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 13

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At night they came up the valley and tried to rush the lines of the 2/22, or they stayed in the houses below the high reservoir where Able Company was dug in and threw up knee mortar shells. Captain Walter G. Moeling of Able Company had one of his men use a captured grenade discharger to throw shells into the darkness below and was rewarded with an excited panic of shots and confusion. By the 13th the enemy had reset his guns, and shells began to fall into the lines of both battalions. It was the firing at this time which gave place to the legend that there was an artillery school in the south of the island and that now the gunners were firing school problems. It was obvious that the guns—there was at least a pair of them—were being handled with sharpshooter precision. It was not artillery fire in the American sense; there was no attempt to get a dispersion pattern; it was not a matter of regular barrages. But it was atrociously effective. As the men high on the bluff above the river mouth grew careless and grouped or wandered from their foxholes, three or four shells would shriek through the air and burst above them. Occasionally one or two of the men never got back to their foxholes. Men on the high flat top of the reservoir crept to the edge of their point of vantage to watch patrols below, or a few gathered in the shade of a great tree. Then would come the tremendous scream of a great shell and two or three wounded would be lugged away. When tanks appeared over the horizon, the guns would fire; when an amtrac crossed a slight saddle as it brought up supplies, the two guns would punch shells right and left of it. Night and morning the shells came over in a rapid barrage. Even worse were the occasional bursts of 81 or 90 mm shells that gave no warning but just exploded among men digging in or careless for the moment in the seeming security of dusk. For nearly two weeks the men of the 22nd were to live under such a constant but irregular pounding. The Japanese were unorthodox, probably, in using their guns for pin-point targets, but it was a method shrewdly chosen—if it was deliberately chosen—against Marines, who could not be persuaded that quiet or absence of fire did not mean safety.

On the morning of the 14th, 1/22 moved out along the ridge to its left. The companies were going down to join the great battle around Sugar Loaf. Baker Company drove along the ridge; Able Company fought through the houses just below; and Charlie Company came along the river bank. Charlie Company ran into a whole nest of Japanese firing from hidden positions behind the burned and scorched garden walls and lost many men; it had to halt. Only Captain Charles P. DeLong led Baker Company to its objective: the eastern nose of the ridge on which he was. Early in the afternoon they came out on a road which led down to the Asato and directly under the long grassy ridge which the generals had watched from their observation point. These men had not heard the name Sugar Loaf as yet; nor did they know that the hill above them was one of the three hills forming the anchor of the Shuri line. They did know it was a hot spot. As they came out into the open they stepped into a cross fire of machine guns from above and below. As they hugged the line along the ridge, they came under spasmodic fire from heavy mortar shells and the little grenades from the grenade dischargers that would burst near or around them in the little puffs of gray smoke. The worst of the fire came from a line of ragged pine trees along a red clay ridge below them along the river bank. From among the trees nambus chattered when they moved into the open. Here in the edge of the trees where there was no concealment and no cover the Marines enacted a scene typical, not of the front lines, which these certainly were, but possibly of Marines.

In the garden of the house was a pump and a well of cool water. Here one by one the Marines stripped and bathed. When bullets ripped through the trees they laughed and lay flat on the ground, and then resumed their washing. In another way the scene illustrated the paradox of war. Above them on the hill they could see Marines clustered against the flat western end. Very slowly they were advancing toward the crest, blowing caves as they went. Each time that they reached the crest they were driven back. The

men under the trees were spectators at about 700 yards of a desperate battle but were not a part of it. Then as they watched they saw a Japanese soldier creep up over a mound in the field beyond and signal to someone below him and heard the cough of the grenade charger. They fired an involuntary volley and the Japanese turned, eyed them with obvious amazement, and rolled and slid out of sight.

The lines for the night circled from the line of trees facing the road and hill up around the nose of the ridge and back. Captain DeLong set up his CP in the slight defilade at the north side of the ridge. From an OP on the ridge he could watch the finale of the attack on Hill No. 1, as it was to be called. Easy Company of 2/22 was making the assault. The battalion had received orders on this afternoon of the 14th to take their objective line without fail, regardless of consequences.⁷ As dusk came on, the mists thickened and it began to drizzle. The men of Easy Company made a last attempt. Baker Company watched the slow advance to the top of the ridge, then could see the dogged advance of crouching men in the semidarkness. Against the sky line the Japanese showed plainly as they came forward and started to set up a Nambu. Scattering shots stopped them, but Easy Company could not maintain its advance. For the night the men remained huddled near the western abutment of the hill.

In the twilight the guns of the Japanese began to search up and down the ridge and along the draw, interdicting the roads, driving men into the scanty protection of their foxholes as the rain grew heavier and began to flood them. From the red clay ridge below there came up grenades from the dischargers which were more nerve shaking than the noisy shells which whooped their way into the ground.

The night was uneasy but not dangerous for 1/22; there were flares to the west of them dulled by the rain, but no intimation that this was the night of the long assault on Sugar Loaf, the night of the 14th.

In the morning Major Myers came up early and called a conference of his company commanders. He had two tank officers with him. They edged forward along the ridge to the nose where he could look up at Hill No. 1, which it was the battalion's mission to take that day. While they moved, artillery shells were falling up and down the draw. The sudden shocking explosion of a shell that hit on the very spot where they had foregathered, killed Major Myers, three radio men, two tank officers, and wounded the three company commanders. Major Cook took charge of the battalion. For the next two days the battalion was immobilized on the lines that it then held, fronting the Asato.

Across the draw, the fight for Sugar Loaf was drawing toward a climax. It is a difficult battle to write about. The struggle that began on the 11th and that was terminated only on the 20th covered very little ground; the whole battlefield and its approaches could be put inside a thousand yard grid square. But before the hill was won, every combat unit in the division had played its part and carried off its wounded and dead. Logically the battle began on the morning of the 11th when 2/22 started to move forward.

Before the 6th Marine Division moved into the lines, it knew the general disposition of the enemy, and the basic plan of his method of defense. The 27th Division of the Army had been driving against the outer defenses of an arc-shaped line of resistance to which the Japanese had been withdrawing as the outer positions were successively overrun. This line of resistance stretched from coast to coast, from Yonabaru on the east to Naha on the west. It was a kind of natural Maginot Line of rugged twisted hills into which the Japanese had burrowed and from which they fired their guns. It was the sort of position that would have delighted Liddell Hart during that period of his strategical thinking and writing when he was putting forward the thesis that the defense was always stronger

⁷This order of Division is quoted in the battalion journal of 2/22 for 14 May. I have been unable to find it in Division orders. The Regimental orders and journals are not available.

than the offense. It was, in fact, stronger than the Maginot Line. The guns were hidden behind and not in the line, and the fatal errors of the Maginot defense had not been repeated; the mutually supporting strongpoints, that is, the hills that were tunneled to provide quarters for the units in them and to provide emplacements for small arms fire and for machine guns and mortars, could be defended at close quarters.

The western end of the line had one weakness. Here the range of mountains that crossed the interior of the island broke down abruptly into a fairly flat coastal plain. The Japanese general knew that he could not defend this plain for very long against a determined foe who could force the Asa-Kawa. Any troops that he placed there could not be reinforced; they could fight effectively only from certain ridges and hills that were isolated one from another. Once these positions were overrun or by-passed, resistance would collapse. Troops left would have to fight with their backs to the Asato-Kawa or they would have to retreat up the Asato River corridor toward the Shuri Hill mass. The Japanese position in the hill mass at Shuri was an excellent defensive position; but its very virtues could be a danger. Once the enemy had secured the coast and the main roads leading into Naha, he could by-pass Shuri, or envelop it at his leisure. It was a castle, prepared to stand a siege, not to support an offensive.

General Ushijima overcame his difficulties in two ways. He blocked the corridor leading to Naha with perhaps two battalions of troops. At the upper end of the corridor leading toward Shuri he set up a series of strongpoints lightly manned but easily reinforceable. Below the hills later called Crescent Hill and Sugar Loaf, which were adequately and shrewdly tunneled to provide for large masses of mortar fire and sufficient anti-tank guns, a deep valley runs down into the Asato corridor. At its upper end it is overhung by a semicircular escarpment. Troops could be fed up this valley beneath the escarpment where they had complete protection. From the escarpment they could reach in defilade either of the two hills named to reinforce the units there or to conduct a counterattack.

The corridor leading to the two hills the Japanese general blocked at certain tactical obstacles with the usual garrisons of suicide troops. Some of them might be able to get away, but not many. This corridor had one other advantage. It opened directly down the Asa-Kawa valley. General Ushijima placed his heavy guns correctly so that they commanded not only the river crossing but the approaches to the river and each of the three corridors below it. Troops moving across the river could be kept under constant harassing fire; any approach march could be met by the guns; all supplies coming to the front lines would have to run the gauntlet of the shells. These guns were of various sizes, from what seemed to be high velocity naval guns firing what the troops swore was an 8 inch shell down to 150mm and 75mm field artillery pieces. The guns seemed to be emplaced in pairs; they were well camouflaged and cleverly protected. The Japanese artillery men were fond of firing just after the observation planes had withdrawn at the approach of dusk or just before they had come on station in the early morning. It was a nerve-wracking habit. Troops tired from the tension of combat, who had withdrawn from contact with the enemy, watched the slow and graceful flight of the planes in the blue sky and knew what to expect. A battalion that had been in a fixed position for any length of time resembled at these periods a sort of mammoth prairie dog town. Men had wolfed their food and drifted near to their foxholes. When the first shell came over, they disappeared below ground.

It is interesting to note just what details of this general plan of defense were known before the Division entered the lines, and how soon other details were added.

The Division had learned from the experience of the 1st Marine Division. It knew that the Asa-Kawa was the most-to-the-last defensive positions. The periodic report of the G-2 section for 6 May correctly delineates the draw down which the interdicting artillery was firing. Aerial photographs of 10 May mention trenches on 7672 G, (Sugar

Loaf) and the adjoining hills. On 11 May, 7672 G is listed as a strongpoint. On the same day the periodic report states:

A captured enemy document revealed that in the high ground in TA 7573, TA 7673, TA 7572, and TA 7672, the enemy has developed a network of small group positions organized for AT.

An index to aerial photographs, dated 12 May, lists 7672 G3 as a "strongpoint, possible mortar positions." It was at the end of this day that Colonel Woodhouse sent in his notes on George Hill, (Sugar Loaf) to regiment.

But in the periodic report of 13 May (covering the period of the 12th that is, the day on which the two battalions of the 22nd Marines reached the ridge above Naha), there is at least the suggestion that the hills to the southeast may be by-passed:

The enemy situation at the end of the period found him completely driven from the high ground and the numerous points, caves, and covered emplacements which composed his main line of resistance before Naha, and pressed against the outskirts and interior of Naha, itself. The enemy has lost possession of the important tactical terrain between Naha and the Asa-Kawa, and by the end of the period, no heavily organized enemy defenses had been noted to the Division's front.

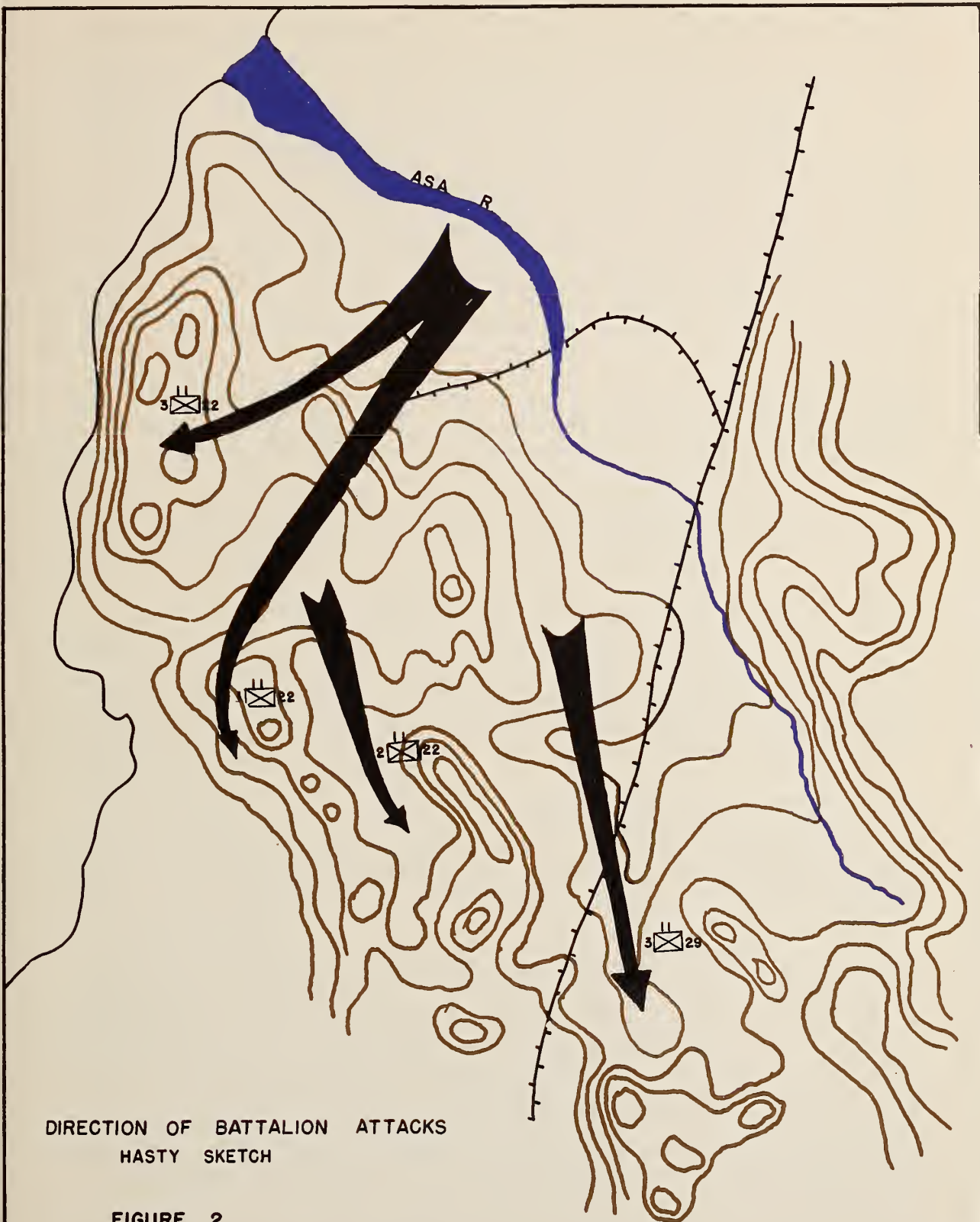
The 13th of May was the day of comparative quiet when the General visited the Observation Point above Naha and watched the advance of George Company, 22nd Marines, down the corridor before him and saw the tanks attacking Hill No. 1. It was then that he foresaw that these tangled little hills would have to be taken before he could get possession of a safe beachhead on the other side of the Asato. The method by which Sugar Loaf was to be defended was still unknown.

The periodic report dated 16 May contains a fairly complete picture of the defensive system:

A G-2 observer reported the following after examining the hill at TA 7672 G, at which the enemy counterattack had taken place early in the period.

There were indications that the enemy considered "Sugar Loaf Hill" (TA 7672 G) as the key terrain feature on the Division's left flank. In addition to the counterattack launched by him in an effort to retake the hill, the enemy had developed a strongpoint from which he could make the hill-top untenable for our forward troops. On the southeast slope of "Sugar Loaf" and the draw immediately southeast of it, the enemy was strongly emplaced in caves to which he could withdraw under fire from the crest of the hill. Because of the proximity of our troops to the enemy's strongpoint, friendly artillery, naval gunfire, and aviation could not be used against the enemy on the east slope only friendly mortar fire could be brought to bear on his cave-area. The enemy had light mortars, small arms, MG's and 47 AT weapons, which he used both to harass the crest of "Sugar Loaf Hill" and to prevent our troops from flanking his strongpoint. In addition to "Sugar Loaf Hill" there are hills at TA 7672 F and TA 7672 B, the possession of which the enemy made no serious effort to contest. From our position on both hills, however, our forces were unable to deliver fire on the southeast slope of Sugar Loaf Hill. The enemy's defense of his strongpoint, which was the center of resistance throughout the period, was extremely skillful and vigorous.

G-2 had learned from the 1st Marine Division that the 6th Marine Division was to be confronted by the 62nd Division of the Japanese Army. Certain elements of that Division had been put in as sacrifice troops in the area that 1/22 and 3/22 were to take. It was this Division that the 27th Division had claimed it had decimated in its month old struggle in the South. Lieutenant Colonel Williams of G-2 learned, however, that units which had



DIRECTION OF BATTALION ATTACKS
HASTY SKETCH

FIGURE 2

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 14

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lost men had had replacements and were at full strength when they first met the Marines. Again General Ushijima had shown his shrewdness in the use of auxiliary troops. He had broken up his Okinawan levies into replacement drafts and used them to fill up his ranks.⁸ The Okinawan fought better when he was with seasoned Japanese, not perhaps that his heart was in the struggle, but because he could not surrender.

This use of militia was also successful for another reason. In fighting from a cave a soldier needs a knowledge of his weapon, especially if that weapon is a MG or an AT gun; he need not know very much about maneuver. As all Okinawans had been trained in their schools in weapons and elementary military science, these troops proved that they could be fearfully effective. Undoubtedly, however, the use of these troops tilted the balance in our favor. A captured document somewhat plaintively reproves soldiers for taking refuge within the living quarters of a cave during bombardment and leaving no one on guard in the bell-shaped foxholes outside to give warning of the approach of the enemy assault.⁹

The 62nd Division had its local reserves undoubtedly, but the 6th Marine Division could not identify them until it met them on the line. But the real interest of the G-2 lay in the mobile and final reserve of General Ushijima, the 44th Independent Mixed Brigade. It had long ago learned that this brigade was on the island; it was pretty sure that one of its battalions had been left on Motobu and another on Ie Shima. But our strategy could not be other than tentative until we learned just how the Japanese General was going to employ his last reserve. The brigade had been held in the south against an amphibious landing; later it was apparently shifted to the general region of Naha.

As a captured Japanese Colonel had said of the Japanese Intelligence—it did not need to be good; all it had to do was to listen to the American broadcasts. The General knew that there were two Marine Divisions on the island. He knew that one had been committed. The IMP Brigade he still held against another attempted amphibious landing to his rear. When he became sure that the 6th Marine Division was in the lines and committed to frontal assault, he began to shift elements of the 62nd Division and replace them with units of the Brigade. They were fresh troops and excellent fighters. The first identifications were made on 12 May.

With the commitment of the 44th Independent Mixed Brigade, General Ushijima had sent to the lines his last large mobile body. He still had under his general direction, however, some 2,000 naval troops whose duty was to guard Oroku Peninsula. From these troops he apparently selected small groups for suicide missions in and around Sugar Loaf, a method of use which did not foster friendly relations between the two branches of the Japanese service.

Once General Shepherd had been assigned by Tenth Army a zone of action, he had a strictly limited choice of what he could do. He did not have the freedom to make an amphibious landing, but he could put all his efforts in a flanking move on land, the type of maneuver, as a matter of fact, which had just been described. Or he could throw all his forces in with the 1st Marine Division and force a penetration in or near Shuri. Or he could do what he did; that is, put forth his first effort on his right, and then having secured a sound base for maneuver, hold on the right and strike to the left. This last move was dictated by two circumstances: (1) Of the three corridors that we had to advance through, only one led directly to Naha; the other two paralleled the advance of the 1st Marine Division. (2) The 1st Marine Division was facing extremely rough

⁸This use of militia bears an interesting similarity to that made of its reserve units by the United States Marine Corps in 1940 when the Organized Reserve was summoned to active duty. The Reserve Battalions were immediately broken up and assigned to serve with cadres of seasoned troops.

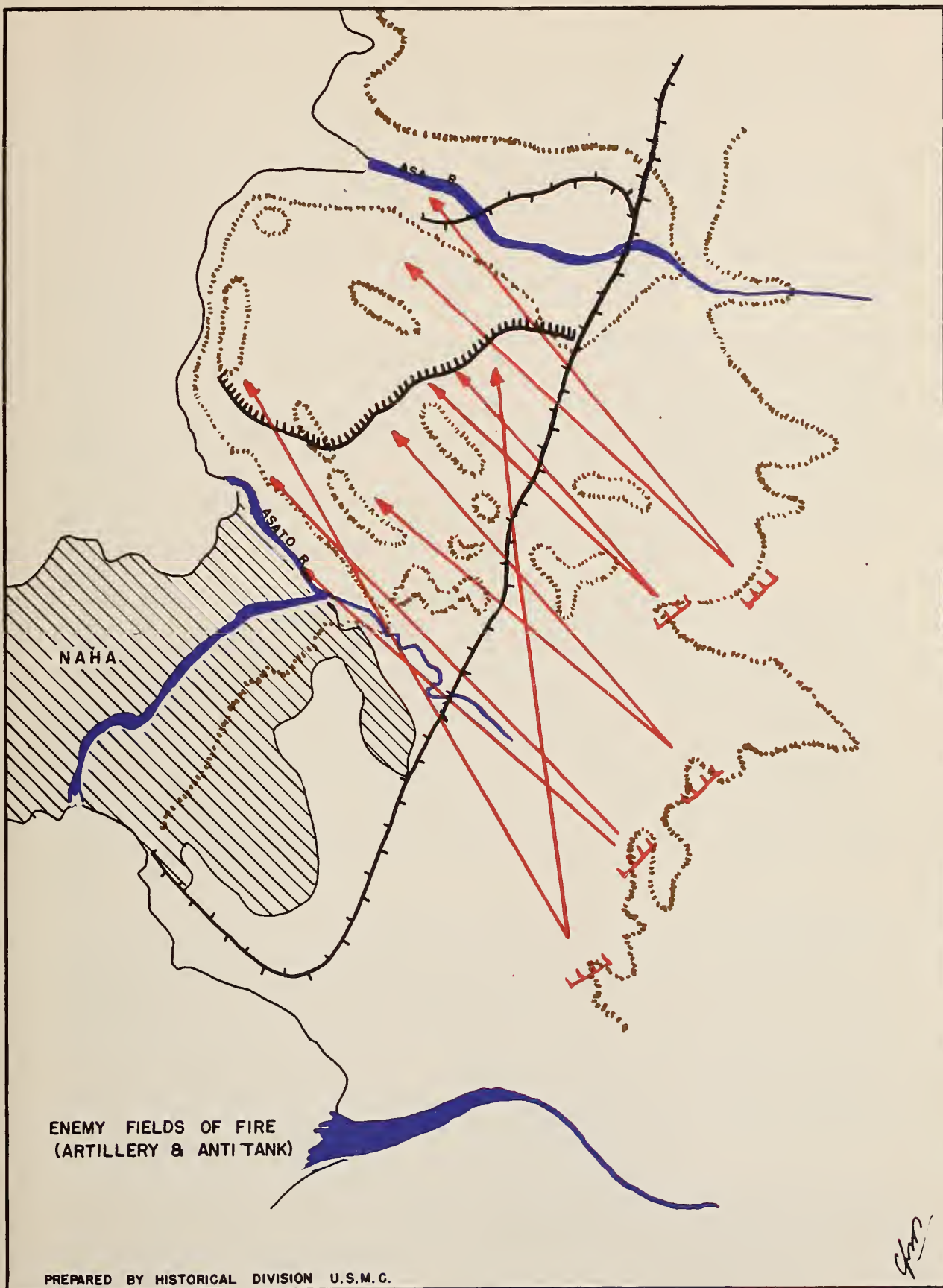
⁹See notes at end of chapter.

opposition in the terrain along the Asa-Kawa and its progress was extremely slow. The only safety for the 6th Marine Division lay in a very bold and vigorous assault down these last two corridors. Theoretically, however, this movement would not be justified by sound tactical doctrine. It is usually assumed that low ground can be taken by seizing the dominating heights above it—in this instance, the winding rugged ridge that led into Shuri. If we waited for the 1st Marine Division or tried to keep a line across the valley our men would suffer heavily without any adequate compensation. An aggressive drive could turn the enemy's flank and put the 6th Marine Division behind the Shuri Hill Mass. Or to put it another way, the 6th Marine Division was performing a classic maneuver; the 1st Marine Division was held back in its frontal assault; the 6th Marine Division by driving ahead could bring pressure to bear from another direction and thus allow the forward motion of the 1st Marine Division—this maneuver was, in fact, successful; Shuri was eventually taken without incident after a 1000 yard advance. No reader should infer from this statement that the 1st Marine Division had merely waited while the 6th Marine Division moved ahead. While the 6th Division was taking Sugar Loaf and the surrounding territory, the 1st Marine Division was making frontal assaults in territory so rugged that tanks could not be used; on the extreme right flank of the division, troops were attacking Wana Draw across open ground that gave them no protection whatsoever.

2/22 was the first battalion of the Division to make an attack toward Sugar Loaf, but at first its mission, as before stated, was simply to defend the left flank of the Division as it marched toward Naha. On 10 May, George Company had simply established itself on a high piece of ground to guard the mouth of the Asa-Kawa corridor. That night Easy Company dug in on its left, and Fox Company took positions that led back to the 1st Marine Division's boundary. As the other two battalions of the regiment moved out in the morning, 11 May, the companies of 2/22 remained nearly stationary. Easy Company was held up in a village before it and by the narrow sunken roads in its zone of action, George Company was pivoting forward on Easy Company; finally two platoons of Fox Company were committed on the right of George Company to maintain contact both with the 1st Marine Division and with the 1/22 on the Company's right flank.

The operation at this point bore a remarkable resemblance to any amphibious landing—and essentially that is what the 6th Marine Division was doing. It had for the period a limited objective, the high ground between the Asa-Kawa and the Asato-Kawa; it had crossed the Asa-Kawa and was driving out its regiments toward the limits of a beachhead, which, once gained, would be roughly semicircular. The mission of the troops was not to "seek out and destroy" the enemy but to seize and hold the dominating terrain. Once we had control of that, the primary purpose of the operation—the destruction of the enemy's troops—could proceed.

Despite the savagery of the battle for Sugar Loaf, however, this beachhead never offered the difficulty that has usually beset the Marine Corps whenever it landed—the paradox of the expanding beachhead, the determination of that point where all reserves would be committed, and the attack would be stalled for want of an extra driving force. That problem had been solved before in various ways. Here terrain was with us; the whole right flank of the Division lay along this seacoast and we would no longer have to hold troops there on continual guard or for later attacks. The only danger was that of a sea-borne counterattack. Against such an attack we had a flexible and effective weapon, the Armored Amphibian. Two companies of the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion at this time moved in along the seaway where it curved north from the mouth of the Asato-Kawa. Behind them the Division Reconnaissance Company under Major Anthony Walker maintained a mobile guard and scouting force; in this position the company could be used readily in front of the lines for the delicate mission of finding out what lay in the apparently empty city of Naha. With their backs thus protected both 3/22 and 1/22 could patrol along the Asato and prepare to cross into Naha. Moreover, 3/22 particularly



could be called on as a reserve or relief force on the left of the beachhead if the enemy pressure there became at any time too great. The position of 1/22 was not so happy; they were essential to the defense of the Asato corridor and had to sit stolidly astride of it enduring artillery and mortar fire without counterattacking and without what would seem to them adequate compensation for the casualties received.

That was the tactical situation. Break it down and look at the men, at the individual companies. The accompanying diagram, a simplification of the positions held on the right flank, is submitted for an easier understanding of what was happening.

From the Shuri Hill Mass the enemy had excellent observation of our positions; he had the guns to make our life miserable. From the ridges along the Oroku Peninsula, he also had observation across the city of Naha. Numerous DP guns behind the ridge could fire directly north.

Apparently the Japanese were aware of our beach defense system and were determined to neutralize it. They had, according to G-2, still a naval force in or near the southern end of Naha that had been especially trained for night landings behind the enemy's lines. Two of their landings had failed miserably because of the LVT (A)'s along the shore. Consequently they shelled the beach consistently. The high bluffs behind the sea-wall acted as a partial protection against the shells both from the east and from the south; the companies of 2/22 and 3/22 had, however, little protection. There was a small trickle of casualties constantly being evacuated from the region. The very irregularity of the firing during the day was a danger, and the firing at dusk and dawn could not be stopped by effective counterbattery fire because the spotting planes had returned to their fields.

The western entrances to the two corridors were, however, the preferred targets of the Japanese guns. At the base of Queen Ridge, 2/22 had its CP; farther north the three battalions of the 29th and later the 4th set up their CP's in partial protection along a road where there was a line of tombs along a low ridge. It was impossible to disguise the importance of these positions from the Japanese: there was the constant flow of vehicles up to and past them—messengers from Division, supply trucks, jeeps, and troops afoot. The battalion CP's suffered heavier bombardment than the front lines oftentimes, and fire of the most nerve-wracking sort: plunging fire that fell just short or just beyond. Morning and evening the ground shook with the concussion of the shells and the air would be full for minutes with the gigantic droning of the fragments that arched in parabolas into the walls of foxholes. More terrible, were the direct hits which blew dismembered bodies into the air, destroyed a whole machine gun crew, or buried men in their sleep.

Over on the banks of the Asato-Kawa ranks of the 1/22 were in a similar situation. Baker Company had the upper reaches of the corridor; they were dug along the ridge that looked over Naha. One morning a Nambu kept the company CP pinned down and two runners were wounded by the captain's foxhole; smoke had to be thrown across the valley so that they could be moved to safety in defilade only a few yards away. Echeloned to the south and connected with Baker Company was Able Company, its lines among the destroyed houses. At the end of the line were the twelve remaining riflemen of Charlie Company, holding a line almost on the banks of the Asato itself in a great concrete school building that had endured the shelling almost untouched. These men had found a piano in an upper story; they had machine guns on the roof. They played the piano and manned the machine guns when little groups of Japanese crept too close.

As the days grew out under these difficult conditions—possibly the worst that a soldier can suffer, since he can only endure, there began to be a mounting toll of combat fatigue cases. A man would suddenly fall out of a patrol and his comrades would pull him sobbing from a shell hole. Or there would be the sudden blossoming of three or

four grenade discharger shells, and a man in a foxhole would begin an involuntary shuddering. Most of these men were the youngsters; some of them were the veterans of several operations. Military operations have in them something analogous to the malign power of X-rays. The human system can never completely eliminate the effects of either and at some point its tolerance is exhausted.

For this situation the Division's psychiatrist had prepared both men and officers and he had a remedy. The problem was to keep the man's self-respect, to give him adequate food and rest, and to return him to the lines, paradoxically for his own good, when he was physically restored and mentally adjusted. Furthermore, the medical staff had to separate out from the men returning from the front those emotionally unable to go back to combat, and those who had simulated the symptoms of combat fatigue through fear. Rest areas were established not too far from the front lines, cases were marked "physically exhausted" to keep the man's regard for himself high, and as far as possible to an overworked staff of physicians, the men were personally interviewed. The results were successful; though the stream of non-battle casualties flowed and ebbed with the intensity of the fighting, large numbers of men were being constantly returned to the front lines with a better understanding of what they were facing and how they could face it. The young men, particularly, who suffered from combat fatigue had a strong sense of guilt. The mental breakdown was usually precipitated by physical exhaustion which ended the conflict between fear and conscience. After a day or two of rest and food the average young man was willing and often eager to return to the front lines. Others were still filled with dread but the doctors could help them.

The night of the 11th had not been difficult for most of 2/22. They were very slowly but steadily pushing across the mouth of the Asa-Kawa corridor; they were doing cross compartment fighting, but their casualties so far had been moderate—if that is a word that can be applied to casualties. During that night of the 11th, Fox Company's platoons had been separated. One had guarded a dump to the north of the Asa-Kawa, one had remained near the mouth of the Asa-Kawa to guard against a possible sea-borne landing.

On the 12th the brunt of the attack was shifted to the left flank of the regiment. Division had resolved to commit 3/29 to keep contact with the 1st Marine Division, and ordered 2/22 to move out in the attack. Essentially this decision changed the direction of attack to nearly due south; 3/22 and 1/22 had nearly reached the high ground above Naha; 3/29 had its zone of action the corridor running down to Crescent Hill; 2/22 had its objective the hills at the end of the corridor that ran just above it. To reach this corridor the two companies in assault, Easy and George, had to swing to the left. As soon as they began to push out, they had their troubles, but of different sorts. The Asa-Kawa corridor had a variety of natural obstacles; sunken roads and numerous small plateaus guarding it, through which Easy Company had to fight. The corridor down which George Company was to pass was open and empty, a shallow draw; there were cultivated fields across it. At its end were two grassy hills which dominated all approaches. Easy Company moved forward painfully. George Company moved fast, but it came under heavy and accurate machine gun fire and mortar barrages.

Captain Ahearn of Fox Company was to be wounded on the next day. On the night of 14 May two of his lieutenants were to be wounded and one killed.

First Lieutenant Gunter was the only company commander of the battalion to carry his company (Easy) through the whole action; the "Gunner," however, lost two of his lieutenants on 12 May and would see most of the remainder go before the end of the operation. Replacements would also vanish from the lines several times over.

In two days George Company, which had entered the lines in full strength, was to be reduced even with its headquarters to the dimensions of a platoon, about 60 men. Captain Stebbins and his executive officer, 1st Lieutenant Bair, who had been with the

battalion since Eniwetok, were going to be wounded during the day, and one lieutenant was going to be killed.

Statistical studies of casualties over the operations of the Marines in the Pacific have shown that the proportion of officers wounded is almost exactly equal to that of the enlisted men. The proportion of officers killed is slightly higher. If the average strength of a company going into the lines approximates 235 men, a high figure, and the number of officers to a company is seven, the number of men left in these companies after four days of fighting is simple to figure. The average loss of officers was 60% to 75% during the period.

In order to advance, Easy Company had to cross the sunken roads, the rice paddies that lay along the stream, and the little valleys, deep and lined with tombs. They could not get in tanks from the west because of deep ditches across the mouth of the corridor.

On the morning of the 12th, the second platoon of Easy Company, now under Lieutenant Richard E. Harris had to go down such a draw. He posted two squads on the high ground and went down the draw with a single squad. As the men crept along a ditch, they met little fire until they reached a turn in the road where three ridge noses came together. Machine guns opened on them; they managed to get close enough to grenade one gun out of action, but another out of reach kept them under constant pressure. Lieutenant Harris sent out a runner to call down mortar fire. The runner was hit as he came out on the hillside and later died, but he got his message through. Under mortar fire the squad withdrew, but the platoon made little further advance that day. On the right, George Company could use tanks and advanced rapidly once it pushed out along the road that was its right boundary. It received fire from its left, however, from the long ridge called Queen Ridge and early in the day lost its Captain, Owen T. Stebbins, badly wounded and evacuated. Lieutenant D. W. Bair, the executive officer, had the company. By early afternoon they had driven forward to the line of hills above Naha and were in at least visual contact with 1/22. Actually they got men up on a grassy hill where they could look down on Naha. Fire was so intense, however, from the left and rear that they could not remain on the summit and withdrew to shelter in the draw below. The position of the other two companies at this time is not clear. Apparently Easy Company was still very close to its original area, in the process of being relieved by 3/29. Fox Company, which had been in the rear of George Company all day mopping up, was still somewhere behind Bair's men.

Late in the afternoon, Bair, Major Philip Morell, commander of the tanks with George Company, and Lieutenant Colonel Woodhouse held a conference at or near the junction of the road that ran north and south and the road that ran down the draw toward Hill No. 1. At this time Colonel Woodhouse ordered Lieutenant Bair to assault the three low hills at the end of the valley. Again the action is not entirely clear. Lieutenant Bair took one platoon of his men only, it appears, and with 11 tanks under the command of Major Morell drove down the valley. They passed between the two hills at the head of the valley and headed directly toward Sugar Loaf. They began to meet increasing rifle fire, but as they passed behind a little chocolate drop hill to their right, the Japanese seized by a sudden panic began to retreat throwing away their arms and leaving mortars and machine guns behind. Bair actually got four men up on Sugar Loaf, and frantically radioed to Woodhouse for reinforcements. Colonel Woodhouse, however, ordered him to withdraw. As the tanks began to retreat and the men with them, the Japs realizing how few men were in the attack came back to their posts and began a terrific fire. Two tanks were lost just below Sugar Loaf, but Major Morell got the crews out and assembled them near the rest of the tanks. An amtrac came up to evacuate the wounded, but almost as soon as it came up and wheeled, the driver was shot through the head.

Bair and Morell got the wounded piled on the tanks and started back, trying to keep the men as much as possible between pairs of tanks. Very slowly George Company disengaged.

By the time that the withdrawal was complete and the companies dug in at the western end of the valley, George Company had been reduced to 75 men and officers including the headquarters group.¹⁰ The lines for the night were circled about the head of the draw; George Company clung to the edge of the northern ridge; Easy Company was in the center; Fox Company which had been in reserve for the day, but had lost its captain, was linked in on the right with the 1/22. That night direct artillery fire down the draw wiped out one of its machine gun squads and nearly all of a rifle squad. On the left of Easy Company, 3/29 had taken over the old positions of 2/22 and maintained physical contact with the 1st Marine Division. That night Colonel Woodhouse sent in the notes that have been quoted, and gave Sugar Loaf its name. The tactical situation was clear; it was not yet obvious just how difficult it was going to be to secure the objective.

Division attack orders for the 13 May called for the brunt of the attack to be carried by 2/22 down the corridor where George had ventured yesterday. Colonel Woodhouse called his three company commanders to the crossroads near his CP and explained the defensive position they were attacking. The hill that George Company had attacked was Hill No. 1; the hill to the north of it was Hill No. 3. Between the two hills and further to the southeast lay Hill No. 2, 7672 George, Sugar Loaf. The three hills formed a triangle, a formidable stronghold that had to be taken by a small force and yet was ideally placed to defeat such a force.

By the next day 3/29 was to report a similar strongpoint at the head of their corridor which was the apex of a triangle formed by three hills, really ridges in 3/29's sector.

The plan for attack as Colonel Woodhouse laid it out was for Easy Company to push down the north side of the ridge above Naha; one platoon of Fox Company with tanks was to keep on their left and support the drive. On the left of the corridor the rest of Fox Company was to drive toward Hill No. 3; George Company, badly shot up and shaken the day before, was to remain in reserve near the CP.

At this time it was growing difficult for the battalion commanders to oversee from good observation points just what their companies were doing and to direct them effectively. The many hills and ridges masked the view. For the 2/22 the only good observation point was on a spur jutting south from Queen Ridge, the long hill mass that divided the two corridors leading to Sugar Loaf and Crescent Hill. From this point Sugar Loaf was masked by Hill No. 3. The direct control of companies was made more difficult by another development that had been caused by the enemy's constant use of artillery. Companies developed a system of administration very similar to that of battalions; that is, they kept a CP well behind the lines to provide supplies, to handle reserves, and to pass requests to the rear over wire. As the system developed, a company would move forward with the captain controlling the two platoons in assault, connected by wire, if possible to the rear echelon, certainly by radio. If the situation was static, the captain was fortunate if he had sound power phones and wire to his platoons; if the platoons were moving out, he had to depend

¹⁰There are several things unexplained about this action: (1) It is not clear why George Company was so far in advance of the rest of the battalion. (2) The reasons for the sudden attack on Sugar Loaf late in the afternoon are not manifest. One of the survivors of George Company said that Lieutenant Bair told them they had to make the attack to relieve pressure on Easy Company. He was not sure of the position of Easy Company at the time. No replies have as yet been received from any of the officers of Easy Company.



Demolitions Seal a Cave.

on the little boxlike 536 radios which had an annoying habit of cutting out behind hill masses and failing altogether in wet weather.¹¹

Well behind the front lines, in the shelter of a hill or in a hollow the executive officer of the company would gather his headquarters and establish a company dump. From this position he could send up reinforcements; he could handle the mortars; arrange for stretcher bearers, keep a steady line of communication to the regiment.

As the companies moved out on the morning of the 13th they must be thought of as adopting this spread system of coordination. Easy Company marched up to the Reservoir Hill where 1/22 was holding its lines. They had been told that 1/22 was to make a coordinated attack down the ridge with them, 1/22 on the river side of the ridge. But 1/22 had no news of such a plan and Easy Company started down the ridge alone with the tanks and the Fox Company platoon on its left.

The first advances were not difficult; they went warily along a grassy nose and then took two little round-topped bare hills ahead of it. But they had only one side of both the ridge and the hills. One man went up to the top of the second hill to see Naha and was shot between the eyes. The old axiom that the Japanese rifleman was a poor shot was not being proved there. At 300 yards and under he was a crack marksman. By noon the advanced platoon of the company was facing a long narrow wooded ridge which led to Hill No. 1. Between them and the ridge was a narrow defile down which a road ran to Naha. Lieutenant Harris took his men down across the defile fireteam by fireteam, each team clinging to the ridge a little farther down. This ridge was partially man-made with a trench system along its top; as the platoon moved down, it killed a few Japs; beside the platoon the tanks came under fire and some of the men along with them were killed with rifle bullets in the heart or head. The tanks ground along the road, but as the road turned down hill they met again a storm of fire that made them pull back. The heavy mortar shells began to fall around the tanks and on Easy Company, and they withdrew under the protection of machine guns firing from the grassy hill to the west. In the shelter of the defile they reorganized and attacked again. This time they managed to hold their position and Lieutenant R. E. Gaumnitz of the Fox Company platoon, took his men through their lines and tried to get up on Hill No. 1. It was now nearing dusk; already Easy Company had had to borrow belts of ammunition from a tank. Fox Company withdrew and Easy Company dug in near the west end of the ridge. Fox Company was supposed to dig in facing Hill No. 1, but fire was so heavy that Lieutenant Gaumnitz wheeled his platoon back against the base of the ridge and stayed there. Across the draw the rest of Fox Company was about opposite them; there was no physical contact between the two, but they could cover most of the area by fire.

During the night 12 Japs crept up to the lines; some of them got into the defile and slipped by to throw a grenade into a foxhole. The man on watch heard the grenade fall and tried vainly to pull his sleeping comrade out to safety before the grenade burst.

By now Fox Company was the only one of three companies which had not suffered heavy losses, and as yet we had gained no permanent hold on important ground. The

¹¹It is apparent that much of our tactical success lay in the maintenance of communication both wire and sound. The heart of the communications system was the imperturbable wireman, moving up toward the front lines or along them with the unrolling reels of thin black wire along which in a very literal sense were to come food, ammunition, and reserve manpower. These wire men suffered heavy casualties without even the compensation of shooting back. According to the T/O they were supposed to carry carbines—which they couldn't conveniently manage; some of them got hold of pistols; most of them went unarmed. At Sugar Loaf a wireman of the 4th Marines started across the bullet-beaten ground between him and an advanced platoon. A mortar shell exploded and tossed him through the air. A corpsman, crouching white-eyed in his foxhole, dashed out toward him, and the weary stretcher-bearers followed. He came back on the stretcher, smoking a cigarette, with a staring white bandage around the stump of a leg. "The———," he was saying, "have left me only one foot."

next day and night were going to be the tremendous climax for the battalion. Lieutenant Gaumnitz was to initiate the attack on Sugar Loaf.

Lieutenant R. E. Gaumnitz was one of the young men, familiar in the Corps, with such tremendous resources of power in them that it seemed as if they could never be killed. They survived lack of food, lack of sleep, long heart-breaking hours of constant activity, moving here and there among their men, and never wilted and never seemed tired, though their faces began to look old and haggard. They seemed to like to fight. They led their men into every scrap and followed them in every withdrawal to protect the rear. They were fierce about getting out the wounded. Lieutenant Gaumnitz was going to be killed the next day at dusk on the southern slope of Sugar Loaf.

During 13 May, 3/29 had still been under the control of 2/22. Item Company, under Lieutenant John P. Stone, which had been in reserve, was this day committed to action and the three companies fought bitterly all day long without appreciable gains of ground. In the centre of the corridor down which they were to move was a long oval hill, its top level with the plateau around it, its base some thirty or forty feet below it. The hill was surrounded by narrow little defiles in which roads ran; on either side of the roads, tombs had been built into the steep walls. What How Company faced was really a little moated castle. The company had to take this hill before it could move down toward Sugar Loaf. George Company and Item Company moved out and around the hill to the base of the long ridge forming the southwesterly edge of the corridor. They clung there, but it was difficult for them to move forward since the hill behind them dominated all approaches down the corridor.

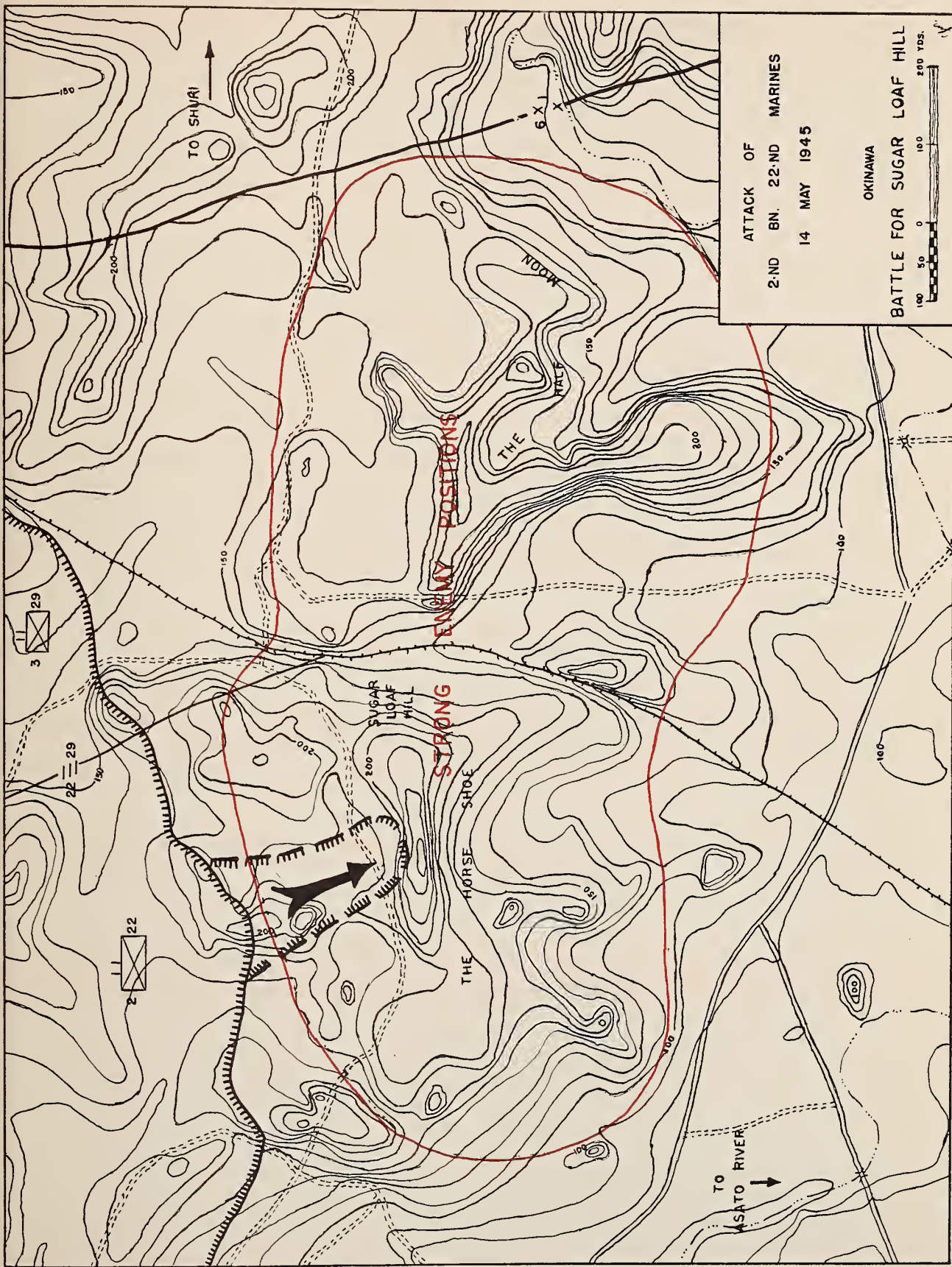
During the day, Captain William P. Tomasello of How Company, had thrown one platoon across the upper end of the draw and into the remains of a village above it. They could not advance further against the hill, however. The other platoons of the company were dug in along the ridge facing the hill. That night the company was under heavy artillery fire; Captain Tomasello was temporarily disabled by the concussion of a shell that had landed near him. In the morning Captain Gamble, who had been with the forward platoon, came back to assume command.

The 14th was the day assigned for 2/22 to take Hill No. 2, Sugar Loaf. Colonel Woodhouse planned a coordinated attack on the three hills. On the right flank, Fox Company was to take Hill No. 1; on the left flank, Lieutenant Robert O. Hutchings with two platoons was to seize Hill No. 3, with the remnants of George Company to his rear affording what support they could. From the two hills an assault could be made on Hill No. 2 under the protection of supporting machine gun fire and with the aid of tanks. On the left George Company/29 under Captain Thomas I. Blanchet was to drive down their side of the ridge dividing the two corridors to protect the left flank of the battalion.

On the right flank the attack did not go well. The plan was for Easy Company to hold on the east end of their wooded ridge to offer what fire protection they could. The tanks with infantry in support were to come down the road, around the nose and fire into the reverse of the hill; that is our forward slope. Lieutenant Gaumnitz and Lieutenant Bystry were to move out into the draw and rush the hill from the west.

The platoon that followed the tanks down around the curve came under heavy fire; and as soon as Easy Company moved out, machine guns down the slope opened up. Out of the 50 men who went out with the tanks, only ten came back; a good part of the morning was spent in getting casualties out to amtracs and evacuated. Lieutenant Gaumnitz had to lead his platoon as close as possible to the ridge and then gain the protection of its battered western end. As long as the men clung there they were safe; as soon as they tried to advance along the slopes or over the crest they came under heavy fire.

On the other side of the draw Lieutenant Hutchings led his men forward with more success. To the north, George Company/29 began to move forward with them. Lieutenant



Hutchings kept machine guns on the ridge chipping at Hill No. 3 till his men were close to the base. He sent one squad up to the crest to stop any possible rush of Japanese and then started systematically to reduce the forward slope. As he moved around the forward base of the hill, the platoon came under the direct fire from anti-tank guns and fire from the caves. He finally stopped and rather than withdraw across the exposed space he had already traveled, took his wounded back over the top of the hill. One fire team which had gone ahead was cut off from Lieutenant Hutchings, but managed to circle the hill and get back. By 1800 the remnants of George Company and of Hutchings' platoon were on top of the hill.

During the afternoon Lieutenant Gaumnitz and Lieutenant Joseph Bystry had secured enough of Hill No. 1 so that they could attack Sugar Loaf. They twice went forward with tanks but could not get down past the open spaces commanded by guns and mortars from Horseshoe Ridge. Once a tank fell into a shell hole and was disabled; another tank was put out of action by a direct hit. Lieutenant Bystry was hit and evacuated. Lieutenant Gaumnitz consolidated the two platoons into one. At about this time Major Courtney returned to Hill No. 3.

At dusk Lieutenant Gaumnitz made a final attempt which was successful. The men on Hill No. 3 saw him go past and on to Sugar Loaf, but then lost sight of him. To protect his rear Easy Company had taken over Hill No. 1. At about 2000, a runner from Gaumnitz's platoon came over to Major Courtney to report that most of the platoon was killed or wounded and that Lieutenant Gaumnitz was dead. About ten men got back to Hill No. 1. Lieutenant Gaumnitz and Corporal Golar both had been killed by a mortar shell as they were covering the withdrawal with their carbines. Major Courtney reported to Colonel Woodhouse that he was taking the remnants of George Company and of the one platoon of Fox Company up onto Sugar Loaf. There were about 40 men in all, Lieutenant Robert L. Nealon had charge of the men in George Company; Lieutenant Edward H. Peseley was in command of the Fox Company men and had Lieutenant Hutchings with him. They had one radio man with them, PFC Hart. They filed silently down the north slope of the hill they were on, and in the darkness crept across the valley between them and Sugar Loaf and onto its north slope. Up only 30 or 40 feet from the base they set up a strong-point: a machine gun with a fire team to support it and at the south end set up another. The two points were thinly connected. Below them the black valley was filled with wounded from the platoon of Lieutenant Gaumnitz.

Major Courtney sent Lieutenant Hutchings and Lieutenant Peseley back to Hill No. 3 to pick up an amtrac to evacuate the wounded. The two officers and the crew of the amtrac worked in the darkness getting the wounded aboard and took them back to the battalion CP. There they loaded the amtrac with grenades and small arms ammunition. Colonel Woodhouse had tried to get reinforcements for them, but all he got was 20 replacements sent up from the Shore Party with two officers who had never seen combat before. The amtrac got safely back.

While they were away, the Japanese had become aware of the fact that another body of Marines had moved onto the hill, since they had begun to use constant illumination. The mortars of George and Easy Companies threw up their little flares and there were some star shells from the ships. Instead of putting the reinforcements onto the lines where they were, Major Courtney decided that they would be better off on the top of the hill. Where they were, below the crest, they were receiving constant knee mortar shells and hand grenades that the Japanese were practically bowling down on them.

They had casualties on the way up from falling mortar shells, but once they were on the crest; that is, just forward of the highest point of the hill, there was a period of comparative quiet. The men dug in rapidly; and the officers walked around and checked their positions. An old Marine, Sergeant Spenelli, took charge of the new replacements

and helped Lieutenant Hutchings place them. They were finally in position around midnight. For the most part they kept silent watch; they had stopped firing machine guns when they found that every burst of fire drew mortar shells. They were near enough to the edge of the forward slope so that they could stop the grenade throwing, but knee mortar shells began to fall with increasing intensity. Major Courtney was in a foxhole on the left flank when he was hit. He crouched as the shell fell but a fragment hit him in the neck and killed him instantly. Lieutenant Peseley was hit in the breast, but stayed in his foxhole and maintained control, though he kept fainting from loss of blood. They could do little for the casualties except take them to a sheltered position in a little hollow on the west side of the hill.

At about 2000, Colonel Woodhouse called them up to say that he was sending up King Company/22¹² which he had been holding in reserve since late afternoon. At about 0230 the men came up slowly past the southern slope of Hill No. 3. There could be no surprise in their approach under the constant illumination; they shouted "Friendly troops" from the valley below and climbed slowly up. Lieutenant R. Finke was in charge, but as he went toward Lieutenant Peseley's foxhole a mortar shell killed him. Lieutenant Roe and Lieutenant Hutchings helped to distribute the men, but it was a bad time. One group of four or five men clustered together and froze as a knee mortar shell dropped in the middle of them. By 0400 there was a lull; Lieutenant Roe had gone into the foxhole with Peseley and taken over command. Lieutenant Hutchings was by this time completely exhausted. He crawled into a hole with one of the men and asked him if he was sleepy. The man said he never wanted to sleep again. Hutchings was content and dropped off to sleep till daylight.

Daylight brought no new hope, it made their position worse. From the Horseshoe Ridge below them and from Crescent Hill rifle and machine gun fire began to come in. They could do almost nothing. About 1000 Colonel Woodhouse called in to say that he was sending up a platoon from 2/29 to relieve them. Fox and George Companies were to gather up their casualties and leave immediately; King Company was to wait for the relief. The relief was difficult. The Japanese with daylight had discovered how few were the troops on the hill and they were massing all the fire they could, and from the caves under the forward slope men began to creep toward the crest. Lieutenant Roe dared to relieve only a small portion of his line at a time, getting his relief firmly in before he withdrew. The obvious transfer of men, easily observed by the Japanese, drove them to a new fury of attack. As Roe and Hutchings withdrew, they could see the platoon of Lieutenant George E. Murphy was already reeling back. They had lost the forward slope and the Japanese could creep almost up to them before throwing grenades. This is the end of the saga of 2/22 at Sugar Loaf. It was relieved that day by 3/22 and returned to reserve in the position above Naha which 3/22 had held. When it was withdrawn from combat the battalion had two hundred and eighty-six effectives. It had been in combat for four days. Most of its original officers were gone; battalion had been stripped of its staff to man the platoons of the companies; replacements had been set up from drafts, from shore parties, and from Division Headquarters. It had not taken Sugar Loaf; it still did not have the whole of Hill No. 1; it was maintaining only a precarious hold on Hill No. 3. It is difficult to put a finger on just what they did; it was something intangible. Fundamentally they did something tremendous; they broke the enemy's spirit. The Japanese had always insisted that we won by sheer force of material strength. As long as they actually believed that, they could comfort themselves in defeat; they could keep the morale of the troops high. That is, they could still believe that man for man they were better and braver than the Americans. Already the Marines in the Pacific had begun to

¹²See the full report of King Company for this night in the notes at the end of the chapter.

make the Japanese fearfully unsure of himself, but before this there had always been excuses: We had caught him by surprise; we had used naval gunfire and planes before we sent on our infantry; we had outnumbered him. At Sugar Loaf all the comforting excuses that the Japanese could offer to himself were gone. He had put good troops in fortified positions of his choosing; he had proved that these positions were invulnerable to mortar or shell fire. Now for the first time the Marines had come forward and face to face beaten him; they had beaten him actually with smaller numbers, with hand arms for the most part (remember at this point that tanks had not been successful in giving support to forward slopes and had been stopped by mines and anti-tank guns, and by suicide satchel charge teams).

To a large extent this statement is conjecture; it can be supported by some statements of prisoners who were amazed but at the same time admiring of the way in which Marines followed up their artillery and mortar barrages and at their neglect of elementary concealment. After Sugar Loaf this latter habit, the contempt or apparent contempt of concealment, or some of the principles of fire and movement could be called just bad training or neglect of training. That is when new replacements came into the line. But there was a reason for the boldness of the Marines in and before Sugar Loaf. They couldn't use fire and movement. The Japanese tactics were designed to stop what could be called a formal attack. They had clean fields of fire surrounding every hill; they had carefully arranged cross fire of machine guns, and they had their mortars carefully calibrated to cover definite areas around the hills. It was, moreover, possible for them always to support a beleaguered garrison from other hills. Cautious movement forward could not be made; at a certain point in the advance, the troops would be pinned down and would have to withdraw. What the Marines did essentially was to make an approach march in the best defilade they could find and then break forward in sudden assault; they ran through machine gun fire—it can be done despite what the experts say; the bullets are, after all some thirty feet apart—they took the mortar shells and the attendant casualties; they withdrew only to attack again. In the Marines the Japanese met men as determined as themselves. They were doing just what the Japanese believed it was impossible to do.

The story shifts now to the attempt of the isolated platoon of Lieutenant George Murphy to hold Sugar Loaf. Dog Company, under Captain Mabie, of which the platoon was a part, had left the battalion CP early that morning; it had a not too difficult task, to mop up behind 2/22.

When Captain Howard L. Mabie reported to Major Glen E. Martin at the CP of 2/22 he was ordered to send one platoon forward to the OP of 2/22 carrying grenades for further distribution. From what he could see of the situation, Captain Mabie was sure that the company would soon be committed to the front lines. He stayed at the 2/22 CP to telephone his own Bn-3 and tell him that. When he got to the forward OP where Lieutenant George Murphy had taken his 3rd platoon, he found that the platoon was already on its way to Sugar Loaf. He got in touch with Murphy over the radio and asked him what the situation was. Murphy told him that he didn't think he could hold the hill without supporting weapons. Captain Mabie did not know at this time that his platoon was relieving the companies of 2/22. To him from his post it looked as if his platoon was being abandoned on the hill. He could see the movement of troops coming back that were not his own. He asked Colonel Woodhouse for permission to withdraw. It was refused.

In communication again with Murphy he told him that he would have to hold the hill. Later men from Murphy's platoon said that Lieutenant Murphy actually gave the order to assault the hill with fixed bayonets. From the top they threw all the grenades they carried, 350 in all, and then began to feel acutely their helplessness. Murphy again

called back to Mabie and asked for permission to withdraw. He was told that he would have to hold the hill at all costs. Murphy reported that knee mortar shells were falling so heavily that he could not stay. That was the last they heard from him. Finally on his own initiative he ordered a withdrawal; the whole face of the hill was alive with the gray eddies of smoke from mortar shells and men were being killed or wounded faster than they could be moved or evacuated. Murphy, his pistol in his hand, covered the withdrawal as best he could; near the bottom of the hill he stopped to aid a wounded man and was fatally hit by a shell fragment. He turned, deliberately fired his pistol seven times up the hill, and then dropped down dead.

As Murphy's platoon retreated, Captain Mabie took the rest of the company forward to Hill No. 3 to cover the withdrawal and to set up an aid station. The Journal of 2/22 records his conversation with Colonel Woodhouse.

1136-D 29th to 6

Request permission to withdraw. Irish George Murphy has been hit. Has eleven men left in platoon of original 60.

1138 - 6 to D 29th

You must hold!

1143 - D 29th to 6

Platoon has withdrawn. Position was untenable. Could not evacuate wounded. Believe Japs now hold ridge.

1144 - 6 to D 29th

Protect your unevacuated wounded.

1230 - E 5 to 6

Japs are trying to put 47mm gun on top of Sugar Loaf. Will have to fire regardless of troops.

1240 - D 29th to 6

All wounded believed to be removed from Sugar Loaf.

1500 - D 29th to 6

Still evacuating wounded, send more smoke.

1522 - D 29th to 6

Men sent in for casualties returned safely. Brought out one man. Could not find any more.

PlSgt Henry Korkuc took over command and got out all the wounded he could find in two amtracs.

The Japanese had by this time opened up with everything they had. Big guns from Shuri began to drive their shells into Hills 3 and 1 and troops apparently were assembling behind the crest of Sugar Loaf. The whole left flank of the Division was at this time wide open. George Company had been thrown off Crescent Hill and was clinging to what it called Charlie Hill, just to the north of Sugar Loaf. Back down the corridor the 1/29 was moving up, and behind them on the ridge the 1st Marine Division was still held up behind Wana Draw. At this moment the Division could have lost all its gains. The attack never developed, however, though the fire fell heavily on the right flanks of Easy Company/22 and 1/22.

As the Journal records, the last wounded man was taken off early in the afternoon. From his position on the forward edge of Hill No. 3, Mabie had been watching Sugar Loaf through his glasses. He saw near the base of the hill a hand waving persistently but feebly; he knew that one wounded man was left. PlSgt Korkuc took charge of a four man rescue team, and by dint of throwing much smoke they got the man out.

When 2/22 was relieved, D/29 was relieved with it and returned to the Battalion bivouac area above the Asa-Kawa.

EAST CHINA SEA



DIVISION FRONT
16 MAY 1945

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIV. U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 17

The Division failed in its first attempt to take Sugar Loaf. It had attacked down the long ridge above Naha and tried to encircle and cut off the enemy's forces from the south. That is, it had followed the sound tactical plan of driving down a ridge and endeavoring to take the enemy on the flank while it held on the left. (See the diagram)

The emphasis now shifted to the left flank, where until now the main effort had been to maintain contact with the 1st Marine Division. As the 3/29 endeavored to maintain control with both the 1st Marine Division and 2/22, its lines had stretched; George Company had pulled forward down Queen Ridge; How Company was still locked in struggle before the hill at the mouth of the corridor. Item Company entered the lines between the two. Though it worked through the burned village behind the hill How Company was assaulting, Captain Blanchet still had to keep his company close to Queen Ridge. He could not drive down the corridor itself. The trouble was that the progress of the 1st Marine Division was much slower than had been expected. The lines on the left waited for the 1st Marine Division to take the high ground ahead of them before they pushed down the draw in front of them toward the formidable Crescent Hill.

Much has been written of the bitter defense of Sugar Loaf, but little about Crescent Hill which was in some ways more formidable than Sugar Loaf. Crescent Hill was named—as are many terrain features by men who saw only one side of the hill. Its reverse slope is a long arc with its concave side facing down the corridor. Actually it is a queer T-shaped ridge.

From the stem of the T the Japanese could deliver fire on the crest of the hill and enfilade any troops trying to attack the forward slope. At the base of this slope were two 47mm antitank guns. The hill to the rear dominated Crescent Hill. The Shuri bastion hung above it and gave direct observation. It was, in fact, barely 800 yards from the hill. Some 500 yards north of the hill was the long ridge known as Charlie Ridge, from the company that took it. The draw between Charlie Ridge and Crescent Hill was covered by fire from two conical hills at its end. In short Crescent Hill could not be attacked frontally until Charlie Ridge was taken. If it were taken it would be almost impossible to hold until the Shuri Hill was conquered. The hill first came into the zone of action of 3/29. The conquest of the corridor itself devolved on 1/29, which entered the lines on 14 May. The 3rd platoon of Able Company, under Lieutenant Warren B. Watson, came up on the left of How Company, still on the edge of the sunken road before the hill it was trying to take. Just then it was in severe trouble. A platoon leader had gone down into the draw with two squads and had disappeared. The company could not get in touch with him. A runner was sent after the squads but he too never was heard from. Able Company had succeeded in getting two tanks in through the territory of the 1st Marine Division. The tanks came down the road; the infantry with them were wounded or killed but the survivors managed to seal the caves and get out the wounded. Captain Gamble could now take his company over the draw. Item Company got tanks in behind its lines and together the two companies cleaned out the burned village.¹³

The two battalion commanders, Lieutenant Colonel Erma A. Wright, and Lieutenant Colonel Jean W. Moreau, now set boundaries for their battalions in the corridor; the railroad tracks were roughly to be the right flank of 1/29.

The night of 14 May artillery fire increased in intensity; the Japanese were pulling out down toward Crescent Hill, and as they left, their artillerymen were free to fire down the western end of the corridor. Here, at the end of the corridor where the road ran down to the Asa-Kawa, was a protected little canyon among jumbled small hills; the

¹³Of invaluable aid in cleaning out this troublesome pocket was the work of the 4.2 chemical mortars attached to the battalion. On this particular day their fire was placed in the desolated village in the draw and the intense volume of fire impressed all the Marines who watched it. The work of these mortars contributed materially to driving out the enemy.

canyon was lined with tombs and in the tombs there were set up the battalion CP's. They were from now on under constant bombardment. It was practically direct fire about 2000 yards. The sharp faces of the tombs on the side away from the guns offered fairly effective protection, but the shells hit on the crests of the hills, in the little rice paddies beyond them. Men lived among the constant exploding of shells that shook the ground under their feet. During the day the firing was sporadic; at the early evening it increased to a terrific tempo. Numerous azimuths had been taken on the gun flashes and our batteries had thrown hundreds of shells trying to knock out the cannon, called Pistol Pete by tradition dating from Guadalcanal. They did not succeed. Our dispersion patterns could not break open the concrete casements which hid the guns. The cannon continued to fire till well after we had passed the Asato River.

Division by now had determined to make the assault without waiting for the 1st Marine Division. The whole burden of the attack rested on 1/29. How, Item, and George Companies were linked down along Queen Ridge. From Sugar Loaf the Japanese were threatening a counterattack. In the morning, (9:15 A.M.,) Captain Heiden took his company through the lines of Able Company and assaulted Charlie Ridge.

This wide, long ridge lay across the front; near the east end was a little pinnacle. As the company moved down the railroad tracks they came under fire from the ridges in front of the 1st Marine Division. They rushed the hill from the west end, where a nose came down nearly to the tracks. The first time they were driven back by grenades. They fell back, reorganized, and went up the hill again. This time they got to the top of the ridge and halfway along it. They had the partial protection of a Japanese trench system but they could not move along the ridge without coming into the line of direct fire from Crescent Hill and from the ridge beyond. The men were badly shaken and feeling desperate, as grenades still came over. At this moment Captain Heiden came clambering up the hill with his open cartridge belt clashing, walking alongside the trench in his haste. The men quieted down and held. Later that day Captain Heiden was wounded and evacuated and Captain Ramsay took the company.

After the first rapid expansion of the Corps after Guadalcanal, promotion had been slow. Many of these young company commanders now at Okinawa had seen service at Guadalcanal as lieutenants. Some had done duty at Samoa in the earliest periods of the war. But no man who entered the service as a second lieutenant after the war began had as yet been made a major. So these young men, now company officers, were in large part the hardy survivors of a great crop of lieutenants who had been wounded or killed or shifted to jobs other than the line. Many of them had been through at least three operations and they knew their jobs. Older men in the Corps might shake their heads a little dubiously and deplore the rapid advancement—but these were the young men who were winning the war, they and the troops who followed them.

Captain Charles P. DeLong, CO, Baker Company, 22nd Marines, had been nearly 36 months overseas. He had been at Samoa, Eniwetok, Guam, and now Okinawa. He had been badly wounded in the arm by a shell fragment, but the doctors thought they could save the arm. He was going back to California.

Captain Walter E. Jorgensen had been CO of Item Company, 29th Marines. He had eight times trained a company and had been at Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, and Okinawa. He was now suddenly executive officer of his battalion. He had been out over 30 months.

Captain Lyle E. Specht still wore the camouflage "good luck" jacket that he first put on at Tarawa, had seen his company at Saipan dwindle to 25, and was to receive his first wound in two days. He carried an ocarina with him which he played with bravado at odd times. He looked as if he were about 20.



Tanks Evacuate Casualties From Sugar Loaf Hill.



Captain Martin J. Sexton, CO, King Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, had joined the 3rd Raider Battalion at Samoa and been at Bougainville, Emirau, and Guam.

Captain Lawrence S. Bangser, CO of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, had been part of the 2nd Raider Battalion. He had scouted behind Japanese lines at Bougainville and counted Japanese troops at Kakile. He had gone through Guam.

For a good many of them this was the only life they had known in the outside world. Some had left college in their sophomore years; others had gone directly from college into the Corps. They had survived the most dangerous period of their training as 2nd Lieutenants and were now in a position hardly more safe. They had the care of the 245 men under them. Through them came requests for air strikes and artillery fires. They had to know the capabilities of machine guns and mortars. They had to maneuver men in their zone of action. On their shoulders rested ultimately the responsibility for casualties. A captain is an officer without a staff. He must see to the disposition of every last man in his company; he must make all the final decisions. During combat a captain hardly eats or sleeps or has time to dig a foxhole. He sleeps in snatches, eats when he can, and grows more haggard every day.

Heiden's men, then, clung to their ridge. Captain Specht brought his company up along the railroad track, and sent one platoon up on a long ridge behind Charlie Company to cover the draw that led down to the tracks. Now before the division could seize either of the two hills, was the time for the Japanese to counterattack down the Asa-Kawa basin where the 1st Marine Division was maintaining only a tenuous contact with the 6th Marine Division. Two battalions of Japanese troops thrown down this corridor could cut the ridge, destroy our communications and snap our supply lines.

On this same day, when 2/22 had been thrown back from Sugar Loaf, there had been the threat of such action which was finally broken by heavy artillery fire. It may be that our terrific concentrations of fire prevented the Japanese commander from attempting to stem our advance by counterattack during the day, but it is puzzling to note that only once during this whole period of the fighting around Sugar Loaf was a counterattack made at night, and that was to secure lost ground. Why General Ushijima did not follow the standard procedure of the Japanese night attack when his opportunities were so great can be explained possibly by his confidence in his defenses, but more probably by his entire lack of intelligence of our numbers. He had of course, knowledge of our movements, but he could not know or did not know that at most periods during this time only two companies stood between him and the sea.

There was more artillery fire during the night but no counterattack. There were a few more wounded. Up here in this narrow churned-up valley, amtracs were again being used to carry up supplies and to carry back the wounded. There was a road of sorts leading along the southern ridge of the corridor but bridges were blown or unsafe and in the fields there were ditches. The amtracs could go where no truck or even jeep could venture; they could carry immense loads; the great empty deck could be loaded with stretchers carrying wounded. Finally the steel sides offered some protection against flying shell fragments, or even against spent bullets. Behind the companies the amtracs were rolling up, rocking across draws where AT guns fired at them, crawling up behind hills. A good many were hit; many under the heavy grinding of daily runs were breaking down. Presently when the rains started they were to be the only means of transportation.

The 16th was the first day on which a concentrated attack was to be made. We had taken the outer bastions of the defense fronting both Half Moon (Crescent Hill) and Sugar Loaf. Now across a front of 1000 yards, five companies were going in against the two hills. The main objective was Sugar Loaf Hill. Item Company/22 was to take that with the aid of tanks, striking in from the northeast. On the right, Love Company/22 was to drive along the ridge it was on and cover the right flank. To the left George Com-

pany/29 was to seize the east end of Half Moon. On the very left Baker Company/29 was to clean out the draw and village in front of the ridge Charlie Company/29 was on and then turn south to aid George Company.

Things went badly from the first; on the right flank Love Company advanced down the ridge and came under heavy fire from the Horseshoe Ridge in front of them and the hillside on their right. They moved along the east side of the ridge, cleaning out caves and destroying an AT gun, but they could not go forward.

In the center Item Company was long delayed. There were Japs on the top of Sugar Loaf setting up mortars and there was long artillery preparation. In the afternoon when the attack was supposed to start, the tanks which were coming up to the support of the company got unaccountably lost, and had to be turned back from the hill on which Love Company had made its attempt; it was 1600 before the company had crossed the draw and had started up Sugar Loaf. The 3rd platoon was to attack the east slope; the 2nd platoon was to cross in front of the hill and rush the western nose. Under the fire of tanks which blasted the top of the hill the two platoons got to the top easily but as soon as they reached it they came under immediate machine gun fire from the long slope behind Crescent Hill and from Horseshoe Ridge behind Sugar Loaf. They could not go forward over the hill because of the massed Japs and the severity of the fire from below. As they lay in holes hastily scraped out or in the foxholes dug two days before by the 2/22 the Japanese started to throw hand grenades timing them so that they burst in the air over the troops. There were immediate and heavy casualties.

It was the same scene that had been repeated before. The Japanese on the reverse slope could not be dislodged by mortar or artillery fire; the tanks could not creep around the west side of the hill without coming under the fire of antitank guns from behind and in front; and no infantry who tried to accompany them could live very long. The air crackled with messages up and down the battalions. Love Company/22 had removed its wounded under cover of smoke, but the company still lay in a cloud of smoke that the Japanese continued to pour on them. 3/22 wanted to know if 3/29 could tie in to give them greater support; 3/29 clinging desperately with George Company to the very edge of Crescent Hill radioed back that they themselves would have to draw back. 1/29 had tried to drive down the draw between Crescent Hill and Charlie Ridge but had itself been thrown back. Under machine gun fire from Hill No. 3 the two platoons of Item Company managed to pull back; under smoke Colonel Wright got the remnants of George Company back into defilade. Nothing had been accomplished save possibly a weakening of the defenders. Long after the battle had surged past Sugar Loaf, it was possible to see how the Japanese could hold so tenaciously to a reverse slope defense. Two thirds of the way up the Japanese reverse slope, a narrow terrace curved across the hill. On the terrace there had once been shallow tombs; these had been supplemented by man-made caves. In the caves the Japanese could sit out any bombardment; from the terrace they could throw both hand grenades and knee mortar shells. Great caves opened at the bottom of the hill into which replenishments could be fed to crawl up to the higher levels.

Baker Company/29 had had the roughest day of all the companies involved. Early in the morning Colonel Jean W. Moreau had taken Captain Jason B. Baker, the CO of Able Company, and Lieutenant Charles P. Gallagher, who was CO of Baker Company, to his OP and had shown them what he wanted to do. Baker Company was to use nearly a company of tanks to sweep the village in front of Charlie Ridge so that Charlie Company could come over the summit and drive toward Crescent Hill. Immediately the company faced east it came under fire from the defenders of Shuri itself; they were only about 800 yards from the rugged folds of the ridge which was the anchor of the Ushijima line and the very nerve center of the defensive set-up.

Lieutenant Gallagher planned to move three tanks across the railroad tracks and

into a little defilade at the head of the draw where they could fire at the farther slopes of Crescent Hill. The eight remaining tanks would come down the railroad tracks, line up abreast, and move down through the village supported by infantry; the tanks were told to go as near to the forward slope of the hill as they could. The fire teams of Lieutenant Robert H. Neff's platoon were distributed along the cut in the railroad tracks to pick up the tanks as they went past. As soon as the tanks came into the clear at the bottom of the draw Neff had been defending, they came under antitank gun fire and heavy mortar shells, but no tank was seriously hit, and the fire teams with the tanks ducked close to the turning treads and escaped injury from the mortar shells even when they fell on the broad backs of the tanks. Gallagher had been told that George Company was to move off at 0800 and he waited in partial shelter for their columns. When they did not appear, he called up Colonel Moreau and was told to drive ahead anyway. The tanks moved out, but they drifted down hill from the ruins. Snipers fired from the forward slope of the hill, and machine guns began to rattle from Crescent Hill and from the ridges at the end of the draw. The tanks could not offer any protection to the men following them here because the fire came from so many directions. They tried most of the morning to go on through, but couldn't. Finally Lieutenant Gallagher got permission to withdraw the men and the tanks pulled back to reload with machine gun ammunition. That was the last order of Colonel Moreau. A heavy artillery shell exploded in the OP and blew off one leg. His runner got him to safety. Major Robert P. Neuffer, executive officer of 2/29, was sent up to take over the battalion. Captain Specht came back that evening and the company went over to its old positions. That was the end of the 16th. The concerted attack had failed because over that long line it was almost impossible for battalions to move together—and it was no country in which maneuver could be tried. It was assault pure and simple.

There was still a fresh battalion of the 29th, the 2nd, and that was committed on the 17th. The plan was to strike and hold on the left; then having secured the left flank to rush and conquer Sugar Loaf Hill. The remnants of How and Item Companies were to assault the western nose of Crescent Hill; Able Company/29 was to drive down the draw as Baker Company had done the day before, and then wheel right to protect the left flank of 3/29. The idea of taking Crescent Hill and then driving forward had been abandoned; the theory of the attack was simply to neutralize the slopes of the hill long enough for Easy Company of the 29th to encircle and cut off Sugar Loaf.

This plan called for three different companies to attack fanlike from the end of the draw. The attacks were not simultaneous; the success of the maneuver depended on Able Company. This time the tanks moved close to the hill and through the village, but progress was slow. The Japanese lay hidden among the stones and ruined walls till tanks were nearly on them and then they threw grenades. Men wheeled out of line and fell with fragments blown into their bodies. Toward afternoon the forward slope was clear and Charlie Company could move. It began cautiously to struggle toward the little hills on the eastern ridge. Lieutenant Watson and Lieutenant Stone got their men lined up for the assault. Captain Alan Meissner with Easy Company came up behind Able Company and laid his plans for the capture of Sugar Loaf in the protection of the western end of the burned village. In all previous attempts there had been no attempts to circle or envelope the hill. Captain Meissner had a tank officer with him and wanted to send three tanks down the railroad tracks and around the forward slope of Sugar Loaf. Between Crescent Hill and Sugar Loaf there was a deep cut; beyond that cut was a fill that curved on down the valley. The tank officer did not want to take his tanks down through the cut and onto the fill which would limit his maneuverability. The tanks remained in the little valley between Sugar Loaf and Charlie Hill. Meissner determined to send his first attack down through the cut and up the forward slope. The 2nd platoon

under Lieutenant E. C. Green crept forward through the cut, with the 1st platoon under Lieutenant C. J. Lynch about 75 yards behind.

Lieutenant Green got through the cut and then deployed two squads preparatory to rushing the slope. He was still in partial defilade; as he started to move out the Japanese suddenly opened up with rifles, nambus, and mortars. While that fury of fire kept up, he could go neither forward nor back. Captain Meissner could see no hope of relieving him at that time even if he committed his whole company. He called Lieutenant Colonel William G. Robb, and suggested that they wait to push the attack until 3/29 had mounted up on the slopes of Crescent Hill and could keep down the fire coming from its forward slope. While they waited for the attack of 3/29, Lieutenant Lynch of the 2nd platoon was hit and PlSgt. L. S. Cockerill took over.

Lieutenant Stone talked with Captain Meissner and they finally agreed that they would make the assault simultaneously. The long lines of 3/29 and Able Company got to the top of Crescent Hill. As they went up Captain Meissner sent his men forward. The 1st platoon was to go down the railroad tracks to the rear of the 2nd platoon and then swing into the assault; the 3rd platoon under Lieutenant Wales was to leave the railroad cut at its northern end and push up over the little saddle that lay below Sugar Loaf. On the saddle the two platoons would be in contact and could envelope the eastern nose of the Hill. The attack was desperate but both platoons got to the top; ten men were left in the 1st platoon and 25 in the 3rd. They could not hold, and Captain Meissner pulled them both to the foot of the hill where they could still deliver fire on the top. They waited here for about an hour. Fox Company/29 had been waiting in reserve, and late in the afternoon, Captain Robert B. Fowler sent up his 2nd platoon under Lieutenant Charles E. Beeham to climb the western nose of the hill and work across the top under protection of a machine gun section and the fire from Easy Company's platoon. Lieutenant Wales sent up one squad from his platoon to help cover their advance. As the platoon worked along the summit of the hill, Lieutenant Beehan was killed, and the platoon was withdrawn. They managed to get out their wounded and pulled back to Hill No. 3 where they spent the night. It was now about 1800 and beginning to grow dark; Captain Meissner withdrew his platoons to Charlie Hill; men crept back after dark from the 2nd platoon, but Lieutenant Green was missing. He had led an assault late in the afternoon to the top; the men thought he had been killed.¹⁴

On the left flank things were bad, though at first the assault had seemed successful. Stone and Watson led their men from the shelter of the village up to the summit, Captain Gamble had used the shelter of the cut to get his men near the western end of the hill. Two platoons of Item Company got to the forward slope of the hill and held; on the left, Lieutenant Gherke had rushed clean over the summit and came back to report to Lieutenant Watson that he had found the Japanese massed in trenches on the forward slope of the hill—more Japanese than he had ever hoped to see. His men had thrown all the grenades they had, sprayed their BAR's along the trenches, and dashed back to the protection of the reverse slope. There were now three companies,

¹⁴It was on this day, the 17th, that the one man attack on Sugar Loaf occurred. Corporal O'Connor, a machine gun section leader, in Item Company/22, during a quiet interval at 1000 decided to make an assault by himself on Sugar Loaf. Tanks were firing in the valley between Hill No. 3 and Sugar Loaf, but O'Connor got under muzzles of their guns and started up the hill with a bag of grenades under his arm and a pistol in his hand. He ran up and down the summit firing his pistol and throwing the grenades till cartridges and grenades were gone. Then he returned across the valley. The tanks had obligingly stopped firing while he was on the summit.

Captain Marston, Jr., CO of the company had been told that there was a Marine on top of Sugar Loaf and he had watched him through his field glasses; he had believed, however, that he was only one of many who had secured the top. Later on one of his men said, "There comes that crazy Marine of ours back from Sugar Loaf." The captain was incredulous at first and then ordered the corporal up. The corporal said that he'd had a good many buddies killed or wounded the day before and that he wanted to get even. Captain Marston sent him to the rear for 24 hours, to have him examined for a psychosis.

or rather the remnants of three companies on the hill: How and Item had less than one-third their normal number and Able Company had already been cut down driving up through the valley. There was some lessening of fire, to their rear and Captain Ramsay took his tanks and company along the front of his ridge and attacked the little conical hills at the end of the draw. Lieutenant Stone asked for additional men and two platoons of Fox Company were sent up to strengthen the line. The situation was still very serious. Men were clinging to the hill as men would cling to a reef in heavy surf. They could not go forward; while they were in partial protection, they could not attack, only endure. Captain Baker of Able Company asked that Baker Company send up a platoon to fill in the thin line. Captain Specht had already been wounded and evacuated and now Gallagher went up to find out where to place his men. He could not get in touch with either Stone or Watson on the little 536 radios and the 300 was not working properly. He and Watson, Stone and Gamble huddled into the machine gun bunker that the tank had destroyed the day before and talked the situation over. Watson had already lost half his men he said. He thought that to put more men on the hill would be merely to lose them. Stone and Gamble thought that they could continue to hold. While they were talking, Gallagher's two platoons had followed him across the draw and were now at the foot of the hill. Gallagher went back and placed Lieutenant Neff's platoon along the road behind Able Company so that their machine guns could cover the company and came back to his two platoons.

There was still fire coming from behind them and Watson had spotted, he thought, the hill and emplacement from which the gun was firing. He went down into the valley and sent a tank up against it with orders to blast the hill, but to beware of firing to their left where Neff's platoon was. The tank successfully stopped the machine gun but on its way back, the driver became confused and the gunner fired his 75 into the midst of Neff's machine gun section. It was drawing on to dusk now and the tanks began to pull back. As they vanished, the Japanese fire redoubled and the air was alive with the Japs' yellow tracers. At the very left flank the fire very literally began to peel the line of men back; they began to slide down the hill. Both Gamble and Stone were now calling up asking permission to withdraw, but even as they asked the line bent back toward the base of the hill. In the dusk the lines got down into the draw and across the road where they dug in. They had no chow or water that night; a dump that was being set up at the end of the draw was under constant fire.

The next morning 3/29 reorganized and got up supplies. Their dump was still under fire and the amtracs had difficulty in getting up near them, How and Item Companies were to take the brunt of the attack; 1/29 was to stay in reserve, holding the left flank. Around 1400 How and Item made an attack with a limited objective. They wanted only the western nose itself. They went down the railroad cut with tanks which swung to the left and covered the forward slope. The men swarmed up to the nose from the railroad cut itself and there held in good defilade in a line which stretched back on either side of the hill to the tracks. They had no fire on their backs; Sugar Loaf had been taken. There had been men on top since early morning.

There was one fresh unused company of the 29th Marines, Dog Company, and that had come in that morning under Captain Howard L. Mabie. One platoon under Lieutenant Murphy had already been committed, however, on the 15th with the 2/22. Captain Mabie came up along the mauled and torn road that lay close along Queen Ridge, up past that which 1/29 had fought for and now held. He swung his company in behind Charlie Hill where Captain Meissner was, and then got it into position on the edge of the valley facing Sugar Loaf. He and Captain Meissner consulted on ways and means. This assault was in effect the last great climax of all that had gone before. If the hill could not be taken now, with the knowledge that we had gained and after we had killed a good many

of the defenders, it could be taken only by the expenditure of our last reserves, the 4th Marines.

Captain Mabie called his platoon leaders up to the OP and told them exactly what he proposed to do: the 1st platoon under Lieutenant F. X. Smith was to flank the hill, moving down the valley and up the western nose, peeling off fire teams as it went to keep a continuous line from base to top. When Lieutenant Smith had reached halfway to the top, the 2nd platoon under PlSgt Ellison was to assault directly up the reverse slope with two squads in the attack in order to hold the left part of the hill. The 3rd platoon was to remain in reserve across the valley, ready with machine guns and rifles for protective fire. After Captain Mabie had briefed his platoon leaders they in turn called up their squad leaders and pointed out to them exactly where they were to go. The squad leaders returned to their fire teams, got them in position, and explained what they were going to do.

While all this was going on, the battalion FO, Lieutenant Snyder, was using the artillery. He pulled the shells back until they were firing a bare 300 yards in front of the forward slope of Sugar Loaf. Meanwhile the 81mm's were dropping their shells just over the crest. After a thunderous barrage, Mabie lifted the fires. He had made arrangements with Captain Morell of Able Company, 6th Tank Battalion, to send three tanks down the railroad tracks and behind the hill, two tanks to protect the one tank ahead. The tanks waddled through the cut just in time to see the Japanese swarming out of their caves on the high terrace to repel an expected attack, and he killed scores of them very literally with the first blast of his gun.

The tanks fired rapidly and then retired, the rear tanks shooting down two satchel teams as they dashed out of caves. As the tanks came back they came upon a reeling figure that waved down to them from the gray torn earth at the foot of the hill. It was Lieutenant Green who had managed to crawl down from the edge of the hill to the railroad tracks and now feebly hailed them. His escape was something of a miracle.

As soon as the tanks came back, Captain Mabie opened up with a rocket barrage on the hill itself from the maximum range of 1200 yards. The trucks with their rocket racks had fired before from the corridor to the south Queen Ridge, escaping usually from retaliatory artillery fire only by the narrowest of margins. The trucks came in over a saddle where they could be plainly seen. As soon as the first test rockets went up, the heavy shells began to fall. The twelve trucks bore a somewhat frantic resemblance to fire trucks as they dashed up, whirled about, and they started as fast as they could for the nearest defilade. At the end of the rocket barrage, the artillery opened again, the signal for assault. The company's 60mm's dropped their shells squarely on top of the hill till the troops started up. The attack took about 20 minutes. The two platoons reached the summit at about the same time and plunged forward, throwing grenades and emptying rifles and carbines. The tanks came out through the railroad cut in time to see the figures of men against the sky.

At about 0950, Lieutenant Smith called Mabie on his 536 and told him to send up the PX supplies; the hill was ours. The men were under steady fire as they dug in, but artillery had not been turned on the hill itself. The 3rd platoon and Company Headquarters carried up supplies, aided by Easy Company. By noon all the wounded had been evacuated, and the men were firmly emplaced. The line ran across the military crest of the hill and down to the forward slope on either end, where a fire team dug in to prevent any envelopment, or an approach from Horseshoe Ridge below Sugar Loaf.

Late in the afternoon Captain Fowler took Fox Company/29 down past the western nose of Sugar Loaf and spread them out along the edge of the Horseshoe Ridge. There was fire coming from the valley below them, but they could dig into their positions along the crest. Captain Fowler knew there was one bad spot: the defile at the very western

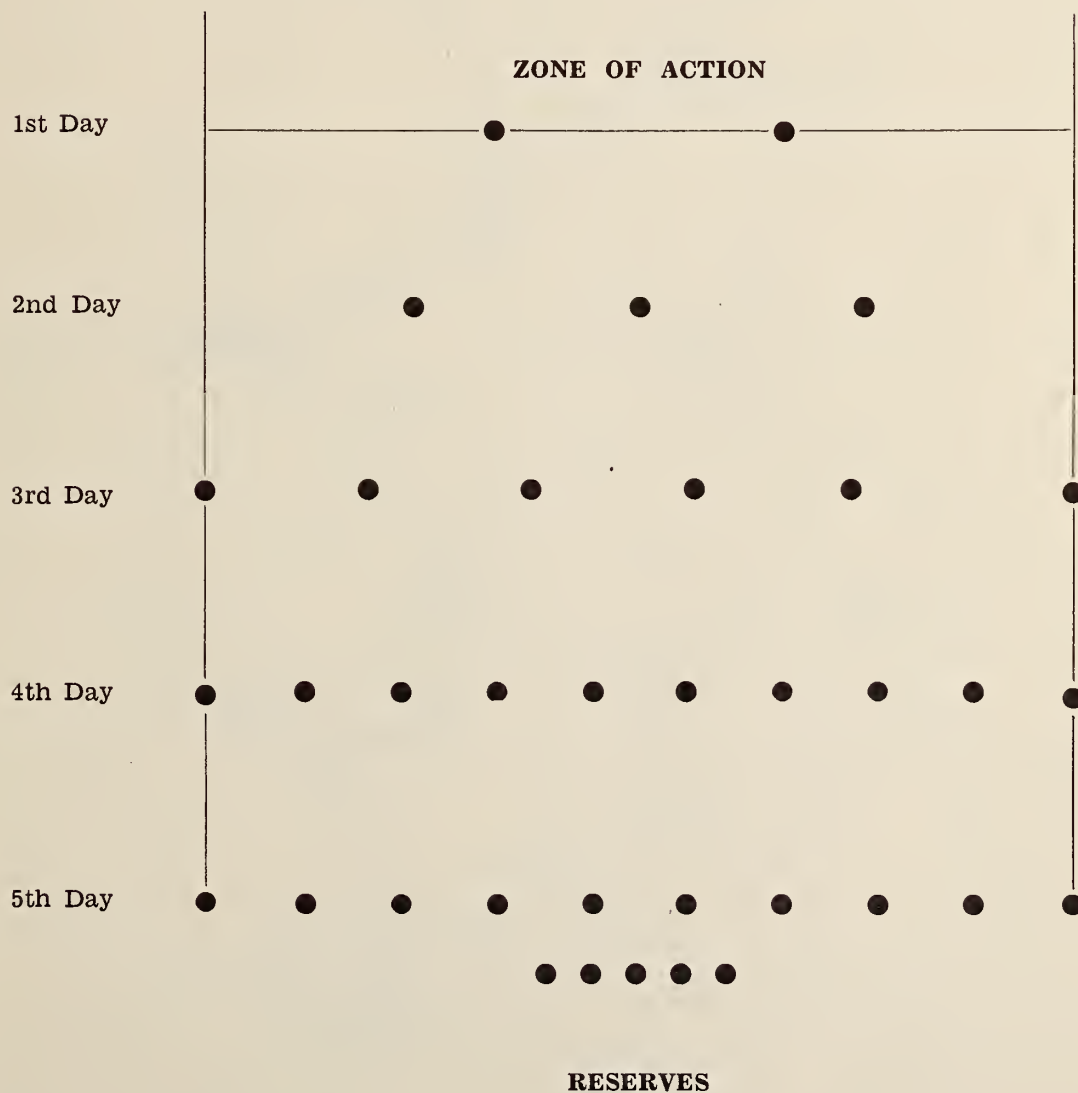
DIAGRAM TO REPRESENT THE EFFECT OF CASUALTIES IN UNIT ZONES OF ACTION

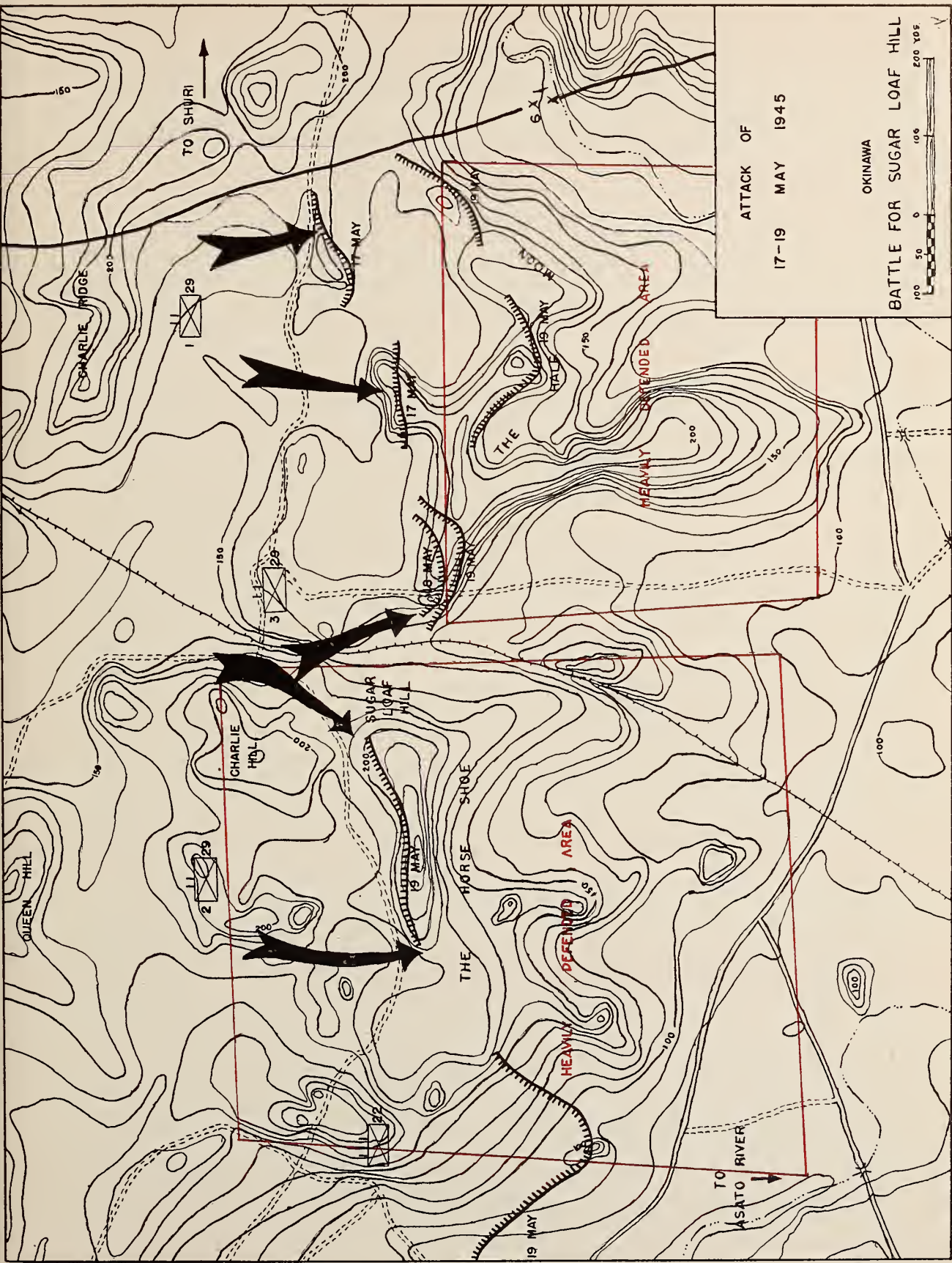
Let each dot represent ten men.

At first the unit of 100 men covers a front of 100 yards; it has one-third its number in reserve.

On the second day it has lost 33-1/3% of its men, but by committing its reserves, the company maintains its front.

On the 3rd, 4th and 5th days it continues to lose men; its frontage must be narrowed; and its driving force is lost.





ATTACK OF

17-19 MAY 1945

OKINAWA

BATTLE FOR SUGAR LOAF HILL



end of the ridge where a road led down to Naha and a bridge across the Asato. This road could be covered from the ridge on which Love Company/22 was emplaced, but Fowler could not get in touch with them or see anyone on the forward slope. He curled his right flank back along the road and mounted machine guns, but they could deliver only plunging fire into the defile. Directly in front of Sugar Loaf Hill the platoon under Lieutenant George S. Thompson began to receive fire from a machine gun directly behind, emplaced in a cave at the foot of the hill. He got in touch with Captain Mabie, and Mabie sent down a demolition team and a flame-thrower, while one tank was persuaded to come back and fire in the caves. Pvt. Lore, who carried the flame-thrower, charged the cave and silenced the machine gun. As he turned to walk away, three Japs came running out of the cave behind him, one with flaming clothes. The Fox Company men called to him in warning and he whirled and squeezed the trigger. Only raw napalm poured out, but there was enough flame on the clothes to ignite it, and in the dusk the three Japanese burst into a red roar of flame, while the Fox Company men cheered. They had suffered nearly 20 casualties from that gun.

That night the 60mm's of the three companies threw out flares every two minutes, and the whole line of reserves was alerted. We had only a precarious hold on the Japanese stronghold, and everyone expected that every attempt could be made to throw us back. This time we had cleared the forward slope of Sugar Loaf and had thrown Fox Company out before it as a guard. If the attempt to take Sugar Loaf back were made, it would have to be a counterattack in force coming up from the Asato Valley and up the narrow roads that led down into the suburbs of Naha.

At 2300 from the dark below came sounds of preparation: there was much yelling and jabbering and a steady barrage of mortar shells. At 0230 the full force of the attack hit the lines. Fox Company men had plenty of grenades and they kept the slopes in front of them clear, but finally groups of Japanese managed to get up the road, through the defile despite our plunging fire, and up onto the high banks of the cut itself where they set up a machine gun that could enfilade our lines. Our own machine guns knocked out the gun twice, but other guns were manned in the same place, and the steady stream of bullets began to be intolerable; there was no shelter from them. The platoon nearest to the gun began to pull back as a unit; then men began to run toward the shelter of Sugar Loaf. The platoon leader of the next platoon gave withdrawal orders and the company got back into the valley behind Sugar Loaf. We lost the ridge, but were still holding Sugar Loaf. After the men had withdrawn from the ridge, the Japanese had tried to send small parties up to the base of Sugar Loaf to the caves there, but the fire teams piled up 33 of them; some probably got through.

The previous night the 4th Marines had been alerted, and now they began to move up the valley to relieve the 29th, 3/4 and 2/4 in the assault and 1/4 in reserve. By now the Japanese had begun to use their artillery all up and down the two hills themselves. They had nothing to lose. The relief was going to take all day in the confusion of smoke that they had to pour down and the smoke that the Japanese in turn threw in. The 4th had many casualties even before they settled into their lines. It would be two days more before we would reach the Asato and could call this region ours.

For the men who had been pushed into this fierce cockpit, the last eight days would always seem an eternity; battalions melted away, companies had vanished, regiments themselves when they assembled after the crisis took up pitifully small bivouac areas. This time had seen one regimental commander relieved, three battalion commanders wounded or killed, 11 out of 18 company commanders in the 22nd and the 29th killed or wounded. There was hardly a single original lieutenant who had marched out with the companies. Before the 4th Marines had driven to the Asato the Division was to lose nearly a regiment of men.

The business of securing replacements had been difficult; at first headquarters at Division had started to strip its various departments and sections of all men that could possibly be spared; later men came up from the Pioneer Battalion and from the Shore Party, but despite everything that was done, the companies could not be kept up to strength and the drive was weakened. The need for replacements was the more urgent because of one peculiar circumstance; the increasing number of combat fatigue cases.

The Division had done a remarkable thing; it had driven forward to the banks of the Asato, had captured the anchor line of the Shuri Defense Line; it had played a major part in winning the battle of Okinawa in those ten days. There were to be terrible and tragic days after this; there was to be the most intense fighting, but from now on there could be no question of the outcome: we had merely to keep on moving and exterminating. Until the 6th Marine Division took over, there had been the extreme danger of a stalemate on land, and a constant attrition of our ships on the sea.

In those ten days, the Division had been constantly engaged with the enemy and had been constantly in the attack save for the battalions of the 22nd who were held in defensive positions along the Asato or in reserve along the hills in front of Sugar Loaf. Before they had gone into reserve, each battalion had had its time of testing and had seen heavy, very heavy casualties.

When a company moves, or a battalion, it leaves its wounded behind or sees them evacuated; the sick vanish to the rear. Those remaining see only the healthy unwounded about them, the tough minded ones. Their attention must always be on the coming attack, on the need to get the attack over with, the ground conquered so that they can get some rest. Under these circumstances there is no contagion of combat fatigue. But when a company stays on a line under artillery fire for day after day; when it cannot use its weapons on an unseen enemy; when it merely endures, men begin to break down, particularly if there is added to constant enemy pressure, the slow-rising memories of combat, of narrow escapes that they have just been through.

Combat fatigue cases began to increase in numbers in the 22nd Marines as the battle for Sugar Loaf kept up. They were to occur even more frequently after the rains began and the relentless pressure increased. The Division had, as before stated, provisions for those who were hit by combat fatigue; it had worked out the rest camp idea, but now these rest camps were being overfilled; and it was more difficult to man them; the nervous cases drifted to the rear and into hospitals where hurried doctors had to group them together. There grew up a contagion mostly unconscious to the men and officers; perhaps too concerned with the welfare of their troops, the officers were over-sympathetic in sending men back from the lines. At a time when man power was low these losses became alarming. A new strictness was ordered; some of the men who had gone back to the hospital began to return to the front, and gradually the situation was straightened out, though the drain on manpower was to continue. The Division psychiatrist claimed unofficially, however, that the 6th Marine Division had the lowest number of combat fatigue cases of all the divisions on the island, and that of these, a very large part was restored to duty in better mental health than when they entered combat. It is interesting to note that very few cases of combat fatigue occurred among the officers, not, according to several officers who have offered opinions of the subject, because the officers have a superior or better trained nervous system, but simply because the officer has been so deeply infused with the necessity of providing for and helping his men, that he had little time to brood about his own state of mind.

The combat fatigue cases were only a portion of the tremendous labors of the medical battalion and of those medical staffs attached to battalions. The peculiar formation of the corridors enabled the first aid stations to push well forward, close to the front lines, where they would be in danger, but nonetheless would have some defilade for protection.



Sixth Division Tank Draws Enemy Fire.

Stations were set up in Jap communication trenches, in spaces behind hills where the Japanese had cleared open-topped caves for parking trucks, any place, in fact, where a fold of the ground gave doctors space in which to work. Here, close to the front lines, they could save lives that would have inevitably been lost if ambulances had had to carry the men far back. The great difficulty was in getting the men out of the zone of fire; once they had them out, they could load them in amtracs and rush them to the aid stations. It was not a matter of treating shock quickly by pouring in plasma, but rather of fast surgery. It is still a question which is the more dangerous type of wound, shell fragments or small arms fire, but certainly some of the more terrible wounds were those inflicted by bullets; lung punctures and facial wounds were the worst. A man shot through the cheeks or mouth has apparently a simple or painful wound; it is in reality very dangerous; his tongue swells rapidly and closes his nasal passages. Sometimes the doctor could prevent suffocation by the insertion of a breathing tube in the throat; at other times he had to perform a tracheotomy then and there to get air to the stifled lungs. Minutes were invaluable. Lung wounds were equally serious. By quick examination the doctor would examine the chest and catch perforations and bind them properly. He could expedite the movement of serious cases with belly wounds to the rear.

In general, the movement was from the first aid stations to the field hospitals of the medical companies, and from these hospitals to the main hospital at Yontan Airfield. From the airfield again serious cases were sent by ship or plane to Guam.

During the latter part of the operation, the little VMO planes were used to carry patients seriously wounded back to the main hospitals.

In the Marine Corps the bandsmen act as stretcher-bearers; in times of stress all men from the unit headquarters are impressed. It is dangerous work; it is also in the hills very tough work that strains every muscle in a man and drives him quickly to exhaustion. Heroism was so common among corpsmen and bearers as to be hardly noticeable.

War is difficult to describe because so many men are involved who are not on the firing line. In the battle of Sugar Loaf, the tanks, the artillery, the amtracs, the mortars, the engineers, all played an extremely important part, and yet it is nearly impossible to stop the unwinding reel of action long enough to give each the due credit. The tanks, for instance. During the operation the tank battalion was to lose 102 tanks, nearly double the number with which it entered the combat. Each branch of the service requires its particular courage; yet the tanks which look so imposing and to the infantry man so safe, demand as much and sometimes more courage than any other. These men in the tanks who went forward half blind, sometimes without the protection of infantry, risked being blown up by mines, being destroyed by the suicide teams with satchel charges, shot through by the terrible shells of the 47's, or worst of all, being rendered helpless by operational difficulties and then being blown to pieces by direct artillery fire, or by incendiaries.

The artillerymen had as their eyes the Forward Observers who accompanied every battalion and called fires. They held the lives of the men they were with in their hands since a false target number could destroy their own troops; they could destroy the confidence of the artillerymen by their own failure. The direct precision of the artillery was a thing to wonder at. A Time on Target Barrage is a miraculous thing when the shells form a whispering blanket overhead and fall with thunder on a designated spot. The artillery did not always destroy the enemy, but frequently it paralyzed him. Captured documents already quoted tell the story: the earnest adjurations of Japanese leaders to their men to stay in their foxholes despite the barrage so that someone can give the warning when the Marines approach. Certainly the artillery in its overwhelming strength was one great element in keeping up the morale of the men.

In this battle, too, the heavy weapons companies were heavily used. Wherever they could find defilade they rolled up the 37's and shot them like sharpshooters' rifles at caves

and emplacements. The self-propelled guns were also valuable for counterbattery work when they could get cover; the Japanese hated them and delivered the full power of their artillery on them in counterbattery fire.

The amtracs reverted in this phase of the battle, particularly after the rains started, to the primary purpose for which they had been designed: as swamp vehicles. These great lumbering vehicles with high silhouettes on land, and no armor except against shell fragments, moved everywhere along the front.

The mortar men could put 25 shells in the air at once; some companies kept their mortar batteries equipped with sound power phones and used their observers in the front lines. These mortar men could make their clumsy smooth-bore weapons swing a barrage across a valley, drop it behind a hill, or throw a dozen shells at a target of opportunity in the briefest of time intervals. One observer watched a Japanese machine gun crew working with perfect precision in the retreat behind Naha. They would send one man back to find the next spot for them to set up; they carried the gun back and set it up again with the precision of robots. The observer watched his chance, and called his fire just after the crew had set up. Nearly a dozen shells fell in the proper place; the gun ceased firing.

And now on the morning of the 19th, the 4th Marines began to move up. For some time the regiment had been in bivouac areas just above and just below the Asa-Kawa. The 2nd Battalion area in particular had been on the bluffs just behind the spot where the 2/22 had been holding guard. As they prepared to move out, a strange and tragic thing happened. An airplane flying overhead suddenly burst into flames, swerved and crashed into the midst of the assembled men. Nearly 30 were wounded or killed. No reason could be assigned for the sudden failure of the plane unless it had run into one of our own shells; there was no enemy artillery or antiaircraft fire at the time. The 2nd Battalion took over the hard pressed 3/29 on the Half Moon Hill; the actual exchange of men was very difficult, carried out under heavy artillery and small arms fire. Our guns threw smoke down the valley to obscure the approaches, but the Japanese were well enough registered in so that they could pound all connecting roads thoroughly. And from now on they could aim their artillery directly at both Sugar Loaf and Half Moon; they no longer had to fear hitting their own men. The 3rd Battalion took over Sugar Loaf. Back at the entrance to the corridor the battalion CP's changed hands. Not in the least terrible of the features of this battle was the fact that this ground had been fought over so much and by so many men. Line after line of men had come in and occupied the same foxholes; the ground along the approaches was covered with the grim detritus of battle, gear in the process of salvage, broken helmets, bits of personal possession strewn from a wounded man's pack, broken rifles, the great piles of cardboard cases of mortar shells. The ground had become filthy with too much trampling, with occasional C ration cans. And there were always a few Japanese bodies strewn about in various stages of decay. Some had been buried, but many others lay swollen, with the greasy shine of putrefaction over their exposed arms and faces.

The full relief was not completed until late in the afternoon. The battalions of the 4th had enough to do with holding their positions, getting up supply dumps, establishing their communications. Shells began to hit regularly on the forward slope of the two hills and then just to the rear of them, and they were still in range of heavy mortar shells and occasional knee mortar shells. The forward echelons of the companies hugged the reverse slopes of the hills; they called in air strikes when they could on the ridges above them, and on Horseshoe Ridge which lay in a semicircle about Sugar Loaf. We were now in a good position for observed mortar fire, and our 81mm mortars began to produce an effect in lessening fire.

In the morning, aided by tanks, the attack moved out slowly, toward the Horseshoe

Ridge with the 3/4 and behind Crescent Hill with the 2/4. 1/4 was still in reserve. Behind Crescent Hill, the tanks destroyed two 47mm guns and the battalion moved slowly out toward the rear portion of the hill against a steady roll of fire. The 3rd Battalion had to cross the gray, dusty, pockmarked ground between them and the Horseshoe. There was cover only in occasional deep shell-holes, and the men had to go forward as men would go forward over a hurricane swept field. Toward late afternoon they came to the brink of the ridge and began to dig in. They had precarious positions, and had to dig in lying flat on their bellies. Dusk came on as they finally consolidated their positions and got up wire and food. Sporadic attacks were already beginning. Occasional Japanese soldiers crept up over the escarpment to fire a few shots; once a nambu burst into a brief chatter. The Marines finally stopped these raids by setting a flame-thrower man on the very edge of the cliff where it dropped off steeply. From his vantage point he could see and fire lengthwise down the line of holes. Presently his gun squirted red in the dusk and two riflemen dropped away in flames. As night deepened, everyone was digging deeper and listening to the actual sounds of the enemy below. Everyone knew, including the Japanese Commander, that he would have to stake everything on the outcome of the night. He would have to throw in a forceful counterattack; that is, he would have to use his best shock troops if he wanted to get back to Sugar Loaf. He used about 500, probably more. His attempt this time was not up the road where he had been successful before, but at the lower points of the ridge where there were steep but hidden approaches. Portions of 3/22 still held the two hills to the north of Sugar Loaf. To their right, 3/22 was tied in with Baker Company whose lines still echeloned back toward the river mouth. Baker Company was waiting on the 4th Marines to drive forward so that when it made its assault on the red clay hill with pines on it below them, they wouldn't be fired at from the rear. It may be that the curiously immobile defense that the Japanese had been putting up was founded on the theory that the counterattack was no longer a valid method of breaking our advance. The counterattack this evening was the second and the last well-organized attack made on our lines. Both attacks were shrewdly delivered, by the best of General Ushijima's men. Some of them were Navy men taken from the Oroku Peninsula force that was guarding the large Naha Airfield.

About 2200 sporadic attacks began, little groups of Japanese thrusting themselves up on top of the foxholes. It was difficult to tell friend from foe. Sometimes men had to toss grenades into adjacent foxholes where the original occupants had been wounded or killed; sometimes grenades came in on men suddenly from a direction that the men would have supposed to be occupied by other members of their own outfit. As soon as the attack opened the little 60's kept up an almost incessant shooting of starshells that came rocking down over the dark gap that filled this space in front of the ridge. Call fires had been put in for artillery and the shells poured over in a steady stream and dropped along all the approaches that led up from the Asato. The steady stream of casualties began to come back through the dark on stretchers; the walking wounded limped in. Behind Sugar Loaf a truck picked them up and carried them to the nearest defilade, a long trench on the edge of Charlie Hill where the first aid station was set up. As the attack grew fiercer, King Company sent back for more help and Baker Company, 1/4, came up under Captain Charles E. James, filed along the road behind Sugar Loaf, and down the line of foxholes with a minimum of confusion. As the night drew on, it became apparent that our artillery was keeping Japanese reinforcements from coming up—or killing them, and the fury of the attack lessened. By dawn the Marines were in complete control, and a check-up showed that our casualties for the night were only about 25 killed and wounded. The ridge in front of the Marines, the positions immediately in front of the foxholes, were covered with the dead bodies of Japanese; sometimes the bodies were heaped in foxholes from which the Marines had been driven. Later as the 3/4 drove forward, they counted nearly 500.

On this morning, 22 May, the orders were for the battalion to move forward toward its objective, the Asato River. As they moved out, they were still under heavy fire from small arms; at the foot of the ridge they were on, there were still Japanese in caves, and tanks were brought up to blast their mouths.

On the left flank, 2/4 suffered no counterattack, but they were encountering the same difficulties that had faced the 29th Marines. They had the western edge of the hill, but they could not advance down it without coming into heavy fire from the ridges that led over to Shuri. The three companies were soon committed to keep forward movement and to maintain contact with the 1st Marine Division. George Company attacking from the southwest got behind the hill, but frontal assaults from the north were met with fierce resistance. By nightfall, however, the lines were still tight.

At this point it became obvious to Division that it would be costly to endeavor to take and hold the whole Half Moon Hill series of defenses since they were still dominated by the Shuri Ridge. With the taking of Sugar Loaf, and the consequent advance to the Asato River, the Division had obtained what it wanted. Division determined simply to hold its positions on the left flank. On the 24th the 3/22 was sent over to take its position facing almost directly east into the Shuri hill mass. This battalion was to maintain contact between the advancing battalions of the 4th and the 1st Marine Division. It was about this time that the 1st Marine Division began to move rapidly ahead on its right and in the course of a day advanced nearly 1000 yards toward Shuri. This sweep indicated the beginning of a withdrawal of Japanese troops from positions that were still tenable but from this point on served no useful purpose. The Japanese have acquired a reputation for senseless holding of positions not tactically valuable, but all during the Okinawa operation, it was clear that General Ushijima was husbanding his troops, and that when he had been tactically overpowered, he was quick to withdraw to positions more suitable for defense. To the very last; that is until the final struggle for the Ara-Sake Peninsula, he maneuvered his troops and endeavored to outguess the Marines. Usually his movements were detected and the tremendous superiority of our artillery blocked the roads while airplanes strafed and dropped bombs. His final withdrawal from the Shuri position was made only with heavy losses even though he moved largely at night.

By the night of the 22nd, 3/4 was on the banks of the Asato River, dug in and thoroughly miserable. The day before, the heavy spring rains, for a long time threatening, had finally burst. Rain fell heavily and constantly; the rains changed the narrow channel of the upper end of the Asato River to a flood; it turned the hard baked soil into a slippery and deep mud; it leaked into foxholes; it prevented fires for coffee or food. There was no way by which the men on the front lines could escape either the mud or the water. Weapons were mired; the MI's were clogged, and the carbines had had their delicate mechanisms fouled. It was difficult even to get supplies up by LVT's; in the deep stretches of mud they bellied down and had to be abandoned.

During the attack on Sugar Loaf and its aftermath, 3/4 had lost its executive officer, Major Carl E. Conron. He had gone up to Sugar Loaf on the morning after the battalion had taken over and had been shot through the heart by a sniper. On the next day Major Rade Enich, the S-3, had been wounded. Now Captain Martin Sexton, CO of King Company, was made S-3 and Captain Vernon Burtman took over the company.

On the right flank of the Division 2/22 had already driven down to the river bank itself; as the 4th Marines advanced past their front, the men of 1/22 took the red clay hill that had held them up for so long. The lines were now intact along the river, and the Division had begun to probe for what lay beyond. They had at first hoped that they could repair the Japanese bridge at the mouth of the river and so proceed into Naha itself. The Reconnaissance Company had conducted two patrols into the area to search out the type of enemy resistance.

A patrol from Reconnaissance Company on the night of the 24th of May went across the river. Two squads went up and down the dark streets near the river and met no resistance. On the 25th, the company went across the upper Asato and deep into Naha to the west of the canal. They met surprisingly little resistance and dug in that night by order and held their line without packs or gear.

Theoretically, the attack into Naha might seem foolish. The buildings had been razed, the streets were cluttered with rubbish; the city could hold innumerable snipers. Moreover, the city proper except for one central hill was largely flat, and dominated by a long ridge that circled down from the north to lie alongside the Kokuba Estuary. It also lay under the fire from guns to the east of Naha and would leave the whole left flank open to assault by the enemy.

The enemy at this point had two alternatives. Both his flanks had been turned; on the east by the 7th Army Division; on the left by the 6th Marine Division. In the west the 6th Marine Division now had command of the Asato River corridor that led directly up into the Shuri hill mass. General Ushijima could withdraw entirely to a new defensive line, fighting a delaying action, and leaving troops in Oroku to guard the vital Naha Airfield; or he could funnel what reserves he had left into the Shuri mass and there make a last stand.

The Division had as yet no clear picture of what the General was going to do; there had been apparent some movement of troops toward the Shuri Hill mass from Oroku Peninsula, and the Division knew that the high ground to the south of the Asato was well-defended. General Shepherd and his staff made the decision to cut off Naha, to sweep to the Kokuba on the hills behind the city, and then, if necessary, to make a turn up that corridor to cut off the Shuri defense. In other words, this plan of attack was a bold flanking attack that would meet groups of the enemy but not his main force. It left our lines of communication open—unless the 1st Marine Division could press forward—and it brought the troops that would enter Naha into the danger of heavy mortar and artillery concentrations. Fast movement of the troops, however, could lessen this danger.

By 24 May it was clear that the enemy was attempting one of the two alternatives. He was displacing his artillery and centering it on the whole Asato River Corridor. New guns were being brought into play from the base of the Oroku Peninsula, and large numbers of civilians appeared on the roads heading south. Many of them wore white, as they had been directed to by our propaganda leaflets and broadcasts. It was possible that among them were many soldiers disguised.

For the past few days the engineers had been desperately trying to find a route to the Asato at a point where they could bridge it. On the left flank of the Division, the Asato narrowed rapidly and could be crossed by troops on foot, but even here, there would have to be bridges for tanks and supplies to cross. On the right flank of the Division, the river was wider; there was a concrete bridge with one span demolished. The engineers probed the road that led down around the left flank of 1/22, but it was under heavy artillery fire immediately targets of opportunity appeared on it, and was heavily mined. Though mine removal teams cleared the road, it was impossible to drive trucks down to the water's edge with the heavy and obvious timbers of a Bailey bridge loaded on them. The enemy had accurate observation down the length of the river valley and drove back any vehicles that appeared.

That night the engineers tried frantically to get some sort of span in place despite the mud and the heavy rain. They first attempted to use an old trick, one that had succeeded on a lesser river in Guadalcanal. They brought down 5 LVT's and prepared to run them into the channel, anchor them, and use them as piers for the bridge timbers. Two of the LVT's however, were blown up by mines and the project abandoned. They threw two foot bridges across that gave the 2/22 access to Naha.

On the morning of the 23rd, both 1/4 and 3/4 had waded across the river at its narrower upper portion and had seized the high ground immediately to the south after stiff fighting of two hours. It was a hill of tombs, full of caves. Final reduction took a long time, but for the present the battalion had observation and could use artillery and 81mm mortar fire. But the men were in a bad plight. All casualties had to be evacuated across the stream, twelve men carrying each stretcher through chest deep water. All supplies had to be carried over by hand.

All day the engineers had been busy trying to establish a by-pass by bulldozing one around the ruined bridge, and draining off the water through a culvert made of oil drums soldered together. The ground was too wet and uncertain, however, for the bulldozers to work. Later in the afternoon, they did get a rough timber structure across that could bear tanks and supply vehicles. But once the tanks were across there was little they could do in the heavy ground. They remained behind the companies and delivered fire where they could from their heavy guns.

On the 24th neither battalion, 1/4 or 3/4 could move forward. 3/4 had been badly cut up during the attack from Sugar Loaf to the Asato, and the men were, moreover, exhausted both from exposure and the terrific physical labor of maintaining themselves by hand carry. 2/4 had been relieved by 3/22 and now came down, crossed the river and took over the positions of 3/4. The battalion was assembled in reserve on the north side of the Asato River.

Early on the 25th, both battalions attacked. The 1st Battalion took the village of Machishi and the 2/4 moved out a few hundred yards. The battalions now occupied a pointed salient into Japanese territory. Their positions lay directly under Shuri whence they were receiving constant artillery and mortar fire. That night the Japanese made an intelligent effort to pinch off the salient. On the left flank of 2/4, they attacked Easy Company which had come late to the lines, was hardly dug in, and had moreover suffered heavy casualties: it had remaining only 40 men and one officer; on the left flank of 1/4 Able Company bent sharply back to join with the lines of 3/22. The company faced the railroad embankment near the place where it crossed the river. The enemy fed his troops down the Asato corridor and then from the protection of the embankment prepared to make an attack that would drive back our flank where it touched 3/22. Able Company saw the movement of troops, however, and called down artillery behind the embankment. The gathered forces of the Japanese could not be reinforced, and the attack was stopped. On the right, Easy Company was reinforced with one platoon from 1/29. The attack here became a grenade duel; the lines were held.

For the next two days, the attack stalled in the mud and rain; tanks could not get up; the bridge washed away and had to be relaid. When the effort was made to drive ahead with only our organic weapons, the casualties were high. On the 28th, 3/29 relieved 1/4, and 1/29 relieved 2/4. All three battalions of the 4th were sent back to an assembly area north of the Asa-Kawa. Artillery fire down the narrow valley had increased as the Japanese realized our purpose. The road leading along the Asato west, which the relieved troops had to travel, was under fire from heavy shells, and from the ruins of the city across the river there was intermittent rifle fire. Shells fell on the road as the sparse columns went along it, and several men were wounded. The battalion CP's of the 29th remained under fire both from Oroku and Shuri.

With the left flank anchored, though not very solidly, the Division began to move into Naha. In itself the city offered no prize: it was a complete ruin, and the harbor slips at the south end of the city were clogged with sunken vessels. Through the city, however, the main supply route for the advance south would have to pass. George Company/22 was sent across the Asato River on the 26th to tie in with and support the attack of the Reconnaissance Company. On the next morning Lieutenant William Christie led a platoon

of the company out along the canal to probe enemy resistance. The platoon came under fire from the heights to the left of the city and was withdrawn; he had met little fire from the city itself.

Now that the relief of the 4th Marines by the 29th had been effected, Division deemed it safe to attempt the conquest of Naha. In the early morning 1/22, Charlie Company in the assault, came down to the Asato in the early dawn dusk and crossed the river. A guide from the Reconnaissance Company met them and conducted them to the lines that the Reconnaissance men held. At about 0600 the company moved off toward the Kokuba River. They moved through the city with hardly a shot being fired and by 0900 were at the river itself. Here Major Cook tried to get in touch with Regiment for further orders. Finally Division gave them direct orders to patrol the island of Ono-yama. They had reached a heavy cement warehouse filled with sacks of cement that offered them both protection and concealment. The broken bridge to the island lay out along the seawall about 500 yards, but to reach it they had to pass over a wide open space of concrete road where there was no cover. Lieutenant Gerald L. Wadman took out a squad that deployed across the road and worked forward cautiously. As they neared the bridge, machine guns and knee mortars opened up on them and made further advance impossible. Wadman started the squad back; there was no possibility of returning the fire. As he neared the warehouse, a bullet went through him from side to side and he died in five minutes. Somewhat later the battalion was withdrawn to an area near the upper Bailey bridge for the night.

On the right flank 2/22 proceeded more slowly along the beach; in the center on the hill on which the Christian Church stood, the Reconnaissance Company ran into a Nambu and lost one man before they could wipe out the gunner. At 1200 Division ordered the Reconnaissance Company to take over the defense of Naha, and the 2/22 to withdraw to an assembly area.

It had been a sunny day after a night of heavy rain, but now clouds gathered and a drizzle of rain began again. To support the Reconnaissance Company, four 37mm's from the 22nd Marines and four from the 29th Marines were sent down; Major Walker placed them in position at the very southwest tip of Naha and along the curving reach of seawall just to the west of Ono-yama to guard against any infiltration across the bridge. The Reconnaissance Company placed its three platoons along the seawall in whatever cover they could find. There was still left, however, a gap of 1000 yards between the left flank of the Reconnaissance Company and the canal. At Major Walker's request, Fox Company was finally brought down in the rain and put into position on his left flank. For the night the whole city of Naha was under the control of the Reconnaissance Company.

For the next few days the situation was peculiar for Reconnaissance Company held the whole city of Naha; on the seacoast along the seawall the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion had moved up and held the seaward position despite sporadic heavy shelling from eight inch howitzers at the base of the Oroku Peninsula. Along the ridge to the east of the city, the 1/29 was driving along south. The acres of the flattened city stretched out on every side with no inhabitants, no movement. A civilian reported a rumor that Merchant Marine sailors, possibly a hundred of them, had been imprisoned in a deep cave in one of the three hills or bluffs near the waterfront, and a platoon patrol of the company went out to investigate the cave system. They found rows of tombs filled with anti-aircraft shells and fuses, and on the seacoast itself a high bluff with an elaborate series of caves that ran down three stories in depth, but there were no inhabitants. In one cave a long stairway ran downward between concrete walls to end on a landing in a mass of rubble where the walls had been blown in or fallen in. But there was no sign of prisoners. Along the Kokuba, the 37mm's kept watch on the long ridge of the Oroku Peninsula barely 600 yards away and engaged in duels with 20mm guns and heavy machine guns.

They also covered the approaches to the bridge and many times prevented soldiers from either getting across the bridge or blowing the remaining spans with satchel charges. 20mm guns kept the approaches to the south end of the city covered, but little by little, the 37mm's knocked them out and the fire dropped way. For the first few days there were occasional snipers, and one Reconnaissance man was killed. But the riflemen were exterminated. The weather was now variable; the heavy day long rains had ceased but there were driving showers at night.

On the left flank, the 22nd Marines had nearly secured the Corps objective: the high ground along the Kokuba Estuary where it broadened into a sort of shallow bay.

During the night of 28 May the Engineers had thrown a bridge across the canal, and early in the next dawn 1/22 had crossed and gone up against Telegraph Hill, so-called because of the many high radio towers on it. These towers could be seen from far north around Sugar Loaf, and during that grim battle it seemed impossible that we could ever reach them. Now the three companies of the 1st Battalion went up against them. As soon as they got to the base of the hill they ran into a strong series of log and sand emplacements all connected by protected trenches. The battalion fought all day long without an appreciable advance. On 30 May both 3/22 and 2/22 crossed the river and passed through the line of 1/22. It was here that Colonel Woodhouse was killed as he was directing the advance. Lieutenant Colonel John G. Johnson took over the battalion.

The extra strength of the two battalions broke through the strongpoint and the battalion advanced rapidly till late in the afternoon when they came on a series of scattered hills that were heavily defended. As at Sugar Loaf, the Japanese had set up their defenses on the reverse slopes, and established fields of supporting fire from one one hill to another. As the battalions came up against this defense on the 31st they called the 1/22 into line again, leaving only Able Company on Telegraph Hill in reserve. Baker Company to the left (see diagram) could not reach Baker Hill because of the strong cross fire from Fox Hill, but Charlie Company managed to get up close enough in defilade so that it could assault the reverse slope of Fox Hill, where it clung precariously. It was again the old story of holding the base of a hill under knee mortar fire and not being able to advance up to the summit or around. Behind Charlie Company Easy Company took X-ray Hill and then tried to advance to the help of Charlie Company. Half way to the hill they were so heavily hit by mortar fire and machine guns that they had to retire to X-ray. When Fox Company tried the same type of advance, they too were struck back, but George Company managed to sweep far to the right and then hook in till they had their men alongside Charlie.

In the morning Lieutenant Lee of JASCO called down an airstrike on Jig Hill and on the forward slope of Fox Hill; there was also a heavy artillery barrage. Three shells fell in the midst of Lieutenant Ben H. Jones' platoon, wounded 17 and killed eight. Despite the shock of these heavy casualties the company moved ahead and took the forward slope, clearing out a 20mm gun and some nambus. Baker Company took Baker Hill with no difficulty and the battalions moved forward to the scattered hills that lay along the river. They had attained the Corps Objective.

The attack of the 22nd Marines was a counterpart to the attack of the 29th Marines to the north. There the 3rd Battalion of the 29th under Lieutenant Colonel Erma Wright, and the 1st Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel S. S. Yeaton were beginning a slow swing with the 3/29 holding on the left and maintaining contact with the 5th Marines of the 1st Marine Division.

The 3rd Battalion, 29th Marines had relieved the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines on 27 May. The latter at that time had its lines in the form of a long salient that pointed south and included most of the village of Machishi, a suburb of Naha. The southwest side of the salient faced across a low tomb-lined valley toward Telegraph Hill. On the



▲ - RADIO TOWERS

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 19

Am



east, the line followed generally the railroad track almost to the Asato river where the 3rd Battalion, 22nd Marines was maintaining contact between the two divisions until it was squeezed out of the line.

While the 22nd Marines were crossing the Naha Canal and attacking Telegraph Hill, the 29th Marines pushed its 1st Battalion around the valley just south of the positions of the 3rd Battalion and onto the northern approaches of Telegraph Hill. As the 22nd Marines drove to the southeast, the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, in keeping pace would cross the long side of the salient formed by the 3rd Battalion. When the attack reached the railroad tracks both regiments would be attacking southeast toward Kobakura and Shichina.

The attack of the 29th Marines was laborious. Enemy fire from the front assumed secondary importance when it was found that the left flank of the 1st Battalion was under fire, as it advanced, from enemy weapons firing from caves across the valley in the lower side of the ridge where George and How Companies were dug in. When these two companies tried to clean out these caves, they came under fire from similar caves and tombs under the 1st Battalion on the opposite side of the valley. To get around this problem, the emphasis of the 1st Battalion's attack was placed on the right and as the 22nd Marines advanced there appeared to be a sag in the 29th Marines' line. After the railroad track was passed this bend disappeared.

Heavy and accurate enemy fire from the Shichina hills held the attack at first to a snail's pace, but by using tanks with the infantry the approaches to Shichina soon fell easily.

On 30 May all firing was halted while an attempt was made to urge the Japanese to surrender, through the use of broadcasts. The attempt was one of those curious things that almost seems to succeed. There was actual crowding of Japanese soldiers to cave mouths in a tentative effort to hear. The only result was that a small group of Japanese came forward under a white flag, threw grenades when they were finally halted near our lines, and then fled. The attack went on for the rest of the day. One boy of Charlie Company threw a grenade into a tomb that must have contained a least a ton of explosives. There were 30 casualties—some of them only lightly wounded.

By 1 June the 29th Marines were on the high bluffs along the Kokuba Estuary. The 2/29 had moved through the lines of 1/29 that morning and had moved rapidly ahead. On 2 June the 7th Marines relieved both battalions and they marched back to an assembly area just below the Asato-Kawa and the Asa-Kawa.

The drive to the Kokuba River had been successful. Though the attack had been at first planned without reference to the 1st Marine Division; that is, it had been assumed that the 1st Marine Division might not be able to protect the left flank, it had developed with the 5th Marines pushing along to our left. The movement had been so rapid that the Japanese soldiers in the salient formed by Telegraph Hill and the Kokuba had been cut off, and had had to fight a battle of extinction with the 22nd Marines.

The 6th Marine Division had now flanked Shuri, and as the 22nd Marines pushed in, the news had come that the Japanese were withdrawing to the south. A plane had swooped down through a cloud-covered sky and suddenly had come upon long columns of marching soldiers and trucks which were taken under artillery fire. The end of the battle for Okinawa was in sight.

This was one of the great points where tired men had deluded themselves into the belief that the 6th Marine Division had done enough and that the rest of the operation could wait on the Army. The Division had lost approximately 3000 men; some companies had seen their personnel almost completely replaced so that men of the original company hardly knew who was on either side of them. The Division had been in the lines 21 days

at a terrific pitch of exertion; the troops argued that they could do no more without long rest and refitting. They were not getting it.

The regiments in their bivouac area were no longer under artillery fire; the fire from the heavy guns had lessened and then disappeared; but they had no comforts, no change of clothes, no opportunity to bathe, no place to rest except the muddy floors of their pup tents. Some of the more fortunate battalions were getting 10-1 rations, but for the most part men were still eating C rations which they heated when they could. No hot coffee or food was sent up to them from rear areas, but the Division Bakery was endeavoring to keep the battalions supplied with fresh buns. The men were also suffering from what could be called delayed shock; that is, they were suddenly beginning to realize the numbers of their losses. These men killed and wounded, in the three regiments, were as good as the Marine Corps had, experienced, cool, wise in the ways of an enemy that they had fought many times. Many were men who had nearly reached the time of rotation or were staying on; some of them were officers who had taken 30 days' leave in the States at the end of their period overseas and then returned to their regiment.

The Division was studying how to maintain the forward momentum of the troops to take the next assigned objective, Oroku Peninsula; the Division had two alternatives: to take it from the landward side or to try an amphibious landing.

The description of a division in combat tends to be boring; despite the fact that men are being killed and wounded, that they are living at a high pitch of excitement, displaying astounding courage, and enduring hardships that they themselves would not have dreamed that they could tolerate, the account of their actions evens into a monotone; day merges into day and the actions are the same; the Marines take a hill, they suffer knee mortar fire and have grenades thrown at them, men are killed and wounded and evacuated. Where thousands of men are involved it is usually impossible to pick out individuals and tell their stories and their reactions. Then, too, it seemed impossible to weave into the story the thousand and one details of all the forces that make the fighting possible: the handling of details of supply, for example; that is, the establishment of dumps near the front, the continual movement of them forward. Then the matter of transportation, the allocating of vehicles, their use, their control.

Perhaps the most important matter of all is the direction of the fighting. This is the story that will be most important for another generation that wishes to know how these operations were planned, and how after they were planned, they worked out. It is a story most difficult to get; it is the story of the regular and special staff, of the decisions of the General, of 19,000 men maneuvering and fighting and dying on what was essentially and finally the decision of one man.¹⁵

The directive centre of the Division was within the Headquarters Battalion which during this period had its Command Post in a village about two miles back from the front. Headquarters Battalion contained all the staff, their offices, such things as the Post Office, the Public Information Section, the Division Quartermaster, as well as the Headquarters Battalion, Quartermaster and Stores. Under the direct control of Headquarters was the Motor Transport Battalion, situated near it on another hillside, and the Reconnaissance Company. The Reconnaissance Company of the 6th Marine Division was commanded by a Major, whereas the T/O called for only a Captain, and it was under G-3, whereas it would normally be used by G-2 as part of its mechanism for securing information about the enemy. Major Anthony Walker, CO of the battalion, had been executive officer of a battalion of 4th Marines during Guam; before that he had been CO of a Raider Company on New Georgia. Because of his rank he could have attached to him a variety of outfits and could and sometimes did command a force at times

¹⁵See Note at end of Chapter.

that amounted nearly to the force of a battalion. On two occasions in the north he had an infantry company attached to him; he had the control of a company of armored amphibians, of a small group of LCI's, of a platoon of 37mm's. He carried JASCO men with him when it was deemed necessary and artillery observers when he was in a position to use them. Directly under the control of Colonel Victor H. Krulak, the company became a body of skilled scouts working out from behind the lines on tanks and in trucks in the northern phase of the operation. Traveling light without packs in this way they were able to cover large amounts of ground during the day and provide accurate information immediately to the operational centre as a basis for later plans. In the south, the company had been used as security for the Division CP, as Beach Defense on the coasts below the Asa-Kawa, as Reconnaissance troops when they pushed into Naha, as reserve in threatened emergencies, when they were pulled up behind the 3/4 when it was about to cross the Asato. In previous operations, the scout and snipers platoon had had little opportunity to work out from closely a besieged beachhead, as at Saipan, Guam or Peleliu. In the larger area of Okinawa the company was being used very effectively; its forces of highly trained specialists were not being wasted by being thrown into the line.

Foremost of the sections, in immediacy—that is, in direct relation to the fighting—was the G-3 section, under Lieutenant Colonel Victor H. Krulak. Colonel Krulak had appeared in 1936 in China as another second lieutenant; early in the war he had been two years an aide to Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, and had later been CO of the 2nd Parachute Battalion in its raid on Choiseul Island, almost the only instance in the Pacific of what was really a commando raid. Colonel Krulak was directly served by the usual staff and advisors. Second Lieutenant J. W. McGrory was the eyes of the staff, who flew over the lines in all sorts of planes. A G-3 air observer had first been used by the 4th Marine Division on Saipan; the 1st Provisional Brigade had made an air observer a regular member of the staff; the 6th Marine Division had continued the practice. Not satisfied with reports alone, General Shepherd insisted on personal observation, and every day advanced to effective observation points from which to see as much of the combat as he could as a basis for attack orders on the following day; Colonel Krulak was with the General on these occasions.

The G-2 Section was under Lieutenant Colonel Thomas E. Williams, USMCR, who had been the CO of Intelligence Training at Camp Pendelton where he had perfected the system that he was now using. The only distinct innovation in organization was the use of two OP teams operating directly out of Headquarters. These two teams could cover the front fairly effectively, each observing dead space in the vision of the other. Together they could get complementary azimuths on enemy artillery. The periodical reports of the G-2 were efficiently assembled, and were sent out to the units involved early every morning. One officer of the section had entire charge of writing the reports; he had the task of getting information directly from S-2's during the day, and of getting information for the line desk after his return and assembling the whole. The Order of Battle Officer, Lieutenant Spencer V. Silverthorne, had been a Japanese language officer with the 2nd Raider Battalion, before he entered the 6th Marine Division; he was, therefore, especially qualified to handle all documents that dealt with order of battle. By the use of a careful file system, he was able to secure early identification of all units facing the 6th Marine Division, and his estimates of numbers proved unusually accurate throughout the operation.

The G-4 section, under Lieutenant Colonel August Larson and his assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Wayne H. Adams, had a heavier task than had ever been given a Marine Division before. The amount of transportation assigned a Marine Division is based on the theory that an amphibious attempt will rarely establish a beachhead greater than

10 miles. The 6th Marine Division was to traverse the whole length of a 60 mile island. Effective supply was accomplished only by the most careful use of all requests for transportation. All requests were funneled into Division Headquarters and there adjudged. By the use at times of waterborne vehicles, LSTs, LCTs, LCMs, and LVTs, by air drops, and by organizational vehicles, supplies did get out to the troops in time.

The G-1 section had to handle the whole matter of replacements, the complicated matter of keeping track of casualties, the thousands of men that flowed from the lines almost daily and the thousands that went back in to replace them; one company, for example, had more than 500 men pass under its CO during Phase III of the operation. Checking of casualties depended on an elaborate card system set up at Guadalcanal before the Division embarked.

This separate little city of Headquarters operated under the administration of Lieutenant Colonel Floyd A. Stephenson who chose the site of the Command Post, allocated space, and fed and clothed inhabitants.

Examined from a Division Headquarters it sometime seemed that the war was fought with wire, paper, and sound. Wire ran up to Corps, and from Corps to the 1st Marine Division. It ran down to each regiment, each attached battalion, and to each battalion CP from regiment. The battalion commander had wire contact with his companies, and the company commander, if he was fortunate, was in touch with his platoons by sound phones. The radio frequency nets covered tanks and airplanes and formed a supplementary net all down division. Tons of paper flowed into Headquarters and tons flowed out. To maintain its control, Division had to have an unceasing stream of communications coming in; to preserve its efficiency, it had to see that a sort of lateral communication was maintained so that an adjacent unit knew what the one next to it was doing, and so, for example, that one unit would not call artillery fire down near or in front of another without permission and knowledge of the unit. It is an exaggeration to say that we won the war because of our superior communications' system, but the statement has a certain justification. It was only through a technically complete communications system that we were enabled to use all our weapons effectively. Compared with us the Japanese communications system was crude. Once we had destroyed it, as our artillery usually did early in the operation, the enemy's efforts to control his troops were ineffective. Colonel Udo, with his comparatively small force on Motobu Peninsula, had illustrated, until we crushed his forces, how effectively a good communication net could be used. Scores of Marines were wounded or killed early in that part of the operation, because the Colonel could so easily maneuver his comparatively small forces against any threat that we made.



Marines Fighting North of Naha.

APPENDIX

INDEX

Footnote 1.

The incidents were all of a trivial nature and were typical of the healthy rivalry between Marines and soldiers in the Pacific.

Footnote 4.

Though Colonel Yahara was captured by the Tenth Army and interrogated by them, and though he says very little about the Marines, his report on the general strategy of the Japanese is extremely important and interesting, and is therefore included here.

HEADQUARTERS TENTH ARMY

Office of the A.C. of S., G-2

APO 357

CICA/KCL

6 August 1945

PRISONER OF WAR INTERROGATION REPORT

Tenth Army Interrogation Report No. 28

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Name	: YAHARA, Hiromichi
Rank	: Col
Duty	: Senior Staff Officer, 32nd Army
Date of Capture	: 15 July 1945
Place of Capture	: YABIKU Civilian Compound
Age	: 42
Residence	: TOTTORI Pref
Occupation	: Army Officer

2. ASSESSMENT

a. Details of Capture:

After attending the dinner preceding the suicides of General USHIJIMA and CHO, Col YAHARA, in civilian clothes, proceeded to carry out orders received from General CHO— "After participating in the final defense of OKINAWA Island, Staff Officer YAHARA will proceed and take part in the defense of the homeland." He made his escape from the MABUNI caves in spectacular fashion, falling over a cliff when observed by Blue troops, inadvertently firing his pistol during the descent. This performance was apparently the basis for rumors that YAHARA had been killed at MABUNI. Alive, though bruised by the fall, Col YAHARA joined a group of civilians in a cave, intending to remain with them and to work his way north, hoping eventually to reach Japanese territory by small boat. When Blue troops approached the cave YAHARA led the group out and accompanied them to the YABIKU civilian compound where he successfully assumed the guise of a school-teacher. Three days on a labor detail depleted YAHARA's already weakened endurance; he collapsed and spent the next two weeks resting. The presence of an idle but complaining stranger aroused the suspicion and resentment of an alert Okinawan who took Col. YAHARA aside and demanded an explanation. YAHARA revealed his identity but appealed to the man's patriotism and begged his silence. To his chagrin the Okinawan immediately reported his presence to local CIC agents who returned and took YAHARA, bitter but unresisting, into custody.

b. Evaluation:

Quiet and unassuming, yet possessed of a keen mind and a fine discernment, Col. YAHARA is, from all reports, an eminently capable officer, described by some POW's as the "brains" of the 32nd Army.

His life falls into the pattern of many career officers of the Japanese service. The

son of a small country landowner, YAHARA won an appointment to the Military Academy, graduating in 1923. Although promotions came slowly he won distinction as a junior officer and attended the War College, graduating, according to his account, fifth in his class (officer POW's attribute this to native modesty, holding that YAHARA led his class). His subsequent assignments included duty in the United States, in CHINA, and as a plain clothes agent in SIAM, BURMA, and MALAYA. Col YAHARA attributes his frequent change of duty to a propensity to disagree with superior officers which made him an undesirable among certain old-line officers.

Col YAHARA discussed the OKINAWA operation freely though he has indicated that he will not divulge information which he considers vital to the security of the Empire. There is no reason to believe that he has made any attempt to deception. It should be borne in mind that his observation of the campaign was made from the comparative safety of SHURI castle and that in some instances his narrative may differ from that of front-line troops.

3. INTELLIGENCE

a. Chronology:

1923—Grad from Military Academy. To 54th Inf Regt (OKAYAMA).

1925—To 63rd Inf Regt.

1926—Entered Army War College.

1929—Grad from War College. Returned to 63rd Regt.

1930—To Personnel Dept of War Ministry.

1933—To US as exchange officer. Wilmington, Boston, Washington, D. C. Att 8th Inf Regt for six months at Fort Moultrie.

1937—Appointed as instructor (strategy and tactics at Army College. Three months in China as staff officer with 2nd Army (N. CHINA Expeditionary Force).

1938—Returned to Army War College as instructor.

1935—Returned to Personnel Dept War Ministry.

1940—Sept. As Japanese agent to Siam, Burma, Malaya.
Nov.

Dec. To General Staff as expert on SE Asia.

1941—July. To Bangkok as Ass't Military Attache.

15 Nov. Received secret orders to staff of 15th Army (SAIGON). Remained at Bangkok and participated in the negotiations for the peaceful occupation of SIAM.

Then participated in the BURMA operation with the 15th Army.

April. Became ill and returned to Japan. Again assigned to War College as instructor.

1944—16 Mar. To OKINAWA as advisor from Imperial Staff. 32nd Army Hq soon formed and assigned as Senior Staff Officer.

1945—15 July. Captured.

b. Pre-L-Day Estimates and Preparations:

The successful US invasion of the MARIANAS convinced staff officers both in the 32nd Army and the General staff that the US would attempt a landing either on TAIWAN, the RYUKYU RETTO, or HONKONG within the year. The 32nd Army staff believed that, because of its strategic position, OKINAWA would certainly be invaded; opinion in TOKYO remained more indefinite, some favoring TAIWAN. The attack was expected either as (a) an immediate landing based from and using troops available in the MARIANAS or (b) an attack mounted from the SOWESPAC area when the tactical situation should permit the withdrawal of troops from that area. The first possibility was regarded as a more dangerous threat since OKINAWA was totally unprepared to repulse enemy landings at that time. The landings on the PALAUS and on LEYTE came as a respite, indicating



Heavy Rains Flooded Gun Positions.

that US plans did not include an immediate attack in this area. The landing was then expected from late March to June 1945, on the assumption that the situation in the PHILIPPINES would have eased sufficiently by that time to permit the withdrawal of troops and the use of LEYTE as a staging area. The OKINAWA landing was expected to take place before the IWO landing because IWO was considered of lesser importance. Some false confidence was inspired by intelligence reports that not enough troops were available to effect a landing on OKINAWA for some time to come. However, in late February reports of shipping concentrations in the MARIANAS and LEYTE convinced the 32nd Army staff that the attack would come in late March or early April.

From an early date the principle guiding the Japanese plan of defense was that since it was impossible to defeat the invading enemy, the most successful plan would be that which denied him the use of the island for as long a period as possible and cause him the greatest casualties. The following plans were suggested, the first being that which was adopted.

1. To defend from extensive underground positions, the SHIMAJIRI sector (i.e. that part of OKINAWA S of the NAHA-SHURI-YONABARU line) the main line of defenses being N of NAHA, SHURI and YONABARU. Landings N of this line will not be opposed; landings south of the line will be met on the beaches. Since it will be impossible to defend KADENA A/F, 15cm guns will be emplaced so as to bring fire against the airfield and deny the invaders its use.

2. To defend from prepared positions the central portion of the island, including the KADENA and YONTAN A/Fs.

3. To dispose one Div around the KADENA area, one Div to the southern end of the island, and one Brig between the two Divs. To meet the enemy wherever he lands and attempt to annihilate him on the beaches.

4. To defend the northern part of the island with Army Hq at NAGO and the main line of defense based on Hill 220, NE of YONTAN A/F. The proponents of this course maintained that the terrain in the northern OKINAWA was most favorable for prolonging the defense although, admittedly, the loss of the more highly developed southern section was undesirable.

Although the withdrawal of the 9th Div seriously weakened the forces available for the defense of OKINAWA, the move was not opposed by 32nd Army since the Div was removed with the intention of using it to reinforce the PHILIPPINES. Plans for reinforcements from JAPAN were made in vain to TOKYO. There was faint hope of getting reinforcements before L-Day, but, Col YAHARA states, none whatsoever thereafter.

The plan which was adopted, i. e., to defend the SHURI line, presupposed Blue occupation of KADENA and YONTAN A/Fs. Although there was some pressure from TOKYO and certain individuals within 32nd Army to include KADENA A/F within the zone of defense, this was deemed impractical, since, due to considerations of terrain. The defense of KADENA would seriously overextend forces barely sufficient for the effective defence of the southern part of the island.

The building of airfields on IE JIMA was criticized, since it was impossible to defend the island for more than a few days. Accordingly, on 10 May demolition of the airfields was initiated. Subsequently, 4 15cm guns were emplaced in positions on the MOTOBU Peninsula from where they could be brought to bear on IE.

The beaches originally considered most probable for Blue landings were (a) the HAGUSHI beaches, (b) the GUSUKUMA beaches (i. e. and ITOMAN), (d) the MINA-TOGAWA beaches and (e) the NAKA GUSUKU WAN beaches.

By the end of March it was expected that the main Blue strength, probably 6—

10 Divs would land upon the HAGUSHI beaches, immediately securing the KADENA and YONTAN A/Fs.

It was believed that the invading forces, might, following the initial landings, establish beachhead perimeters each two Divs in strength, 1½ to 3 kilometers in depth, each Div holding 2 km of beach. The perimeters would be maintained until enough supplies had been landed to permit a large-scale attack, using massed tanks and concentrated artillery fire. The invaders would rely upon material strength to wear down the defenders then making a frontal assault. It was estimated that about ten days would be required to get the HAGUSHI forces in position to attack the main defense line based on SHURI and that during that time the US hoped to force the Japanese to move their main force to the SHURI line and then to effect a not too costly landing, probably by one Div on the coast somewhere S of SHURI, probably MINATOGAWA. Additional landings on IE SHIMA were expected but the landings on KERAMA came as a surprise, foiling their plans for conducting suicide boat warfare.

Artillery was ordered not to fire upon Blue shipping and Divs were instructed not to oppose Blue reconnaissance or initial landings in their sectors until sufficient troops had been brought ashore to render it difficult to effect an escape by boat. The purpose was two-fold, (a) to attempt to deceive Blue intelligence as to the disposition of the Japanese forces (b) to ensure that any attack on Blue beachhead positions would engage and "annihilate" a sizable force.

The weakest point of the final defense plan was considered to be the CHINEN Peninsula. Landings on CHINEN would give the invaders good observation to direct NGF and a position from which to launch an attack upon the heart of the defense line.

Accordingly, only the 62nd Div, considered to be their best and most experienced outfit, was moved into the SHURI line, leaving the main force prepared to annihilate any enemy force unwise enough to attempt a landing to the south. The 5th Army Arty Command was ordered to place all its component elements in defense of the MINATOGAWA sector. The Arty Command OP was established near ITOKAZU (TS 8364 R). The initial US diversion on the east coast increased their hopes that a landing would be attempted and contributed to the great reluctance with which troops were drawn from the S to strengthen the SHURI line. Until the end of April enough troops were left in the south to deal a severe blow to any landing. Hope of defending the southern coast was given up following the abortive counterattack of 4 May. A new plan was devised by which in the event of a landing, 23,000 troops would fight a delaying action, the main force giving up NAHA and YONABARU, would establish a circular perimeter around SHURI, extending as far south as TSUKAZAN.

The absence of a landing puzzled the 32nd Army Sta, particularly after the beginning of May when it became impossible to put up more than a token resistance in the south. Prevailing opinion was that the Tenth Army wished to obtain as cheap a victory as possible by wearing down the SHURI line rather than committing elements to a possibly hazardous landing in the South in the interests of bringing the operation to a speedier end.

Plans for fleet support of ground forces in the defense of OKINAWA were contemplated but never emerged from a rather nebulous stage. Coordination of such activities was in the hands of the OKINAWA Base Force. 32nd Army also maintained direct liaison with the Navy General Staff which actually showed more interest in the campaign than did the Army General Staff. No naval personnel ashore were specifically charged with direction of NGF should fleet units succeed in reaching OKINAWA.

The 32nd Army profited from the lesson learned on SAIPAN where Japanese army had been wiped out in the first days of the operations. The overall command of artillery on OKINAWA was in the hands of the 5th Army Arty Command.

The factors responsible for the failure of Japanese army in the past were thought to be (1) the lack of cave positions, preferably such that the piece could be fired from inside the cave, and (2) the premature firing, exposing positions before real damage could be done to the enemy.

Consequently, under the Army Command's direction, preparations were made for concealing the guns, emplaced in the elaborate system of caves encountered later by Blue forces. Extensive surveying was conducted by the Army Survey Co, supplying all army units with data expediting the problem for transfer and massing of fire.

The Japanese realized that ammo was insufficient for a protracted campaign. Impassioned pleas to TOKYO brought only the information that the shipping situation was acute. The Japanese prepared accordingly, to make the most efficient use of available ammo.

The caliber of the Japanese general officers charged with the defense of OKINAWA was uniformly high. The following comments by Col YAHARA throw some light on the characters of the defeated commanders.

Lt Gen USHIJIMA, Mitsuru, CG, 32nd Army:—quiet, reserved, but extremely capable officer, held in the highest esteem by all men of his command. He was regarded by some as a latter-day SAIGO Takamori (a military hero of the time of the MEIJI Restoration). He delegated all authority to his subordinates, yet took the full responsibility for any decisions made by actual planning; his position was, in fact, little more than an eminently suitable figurehead.

Lt Gen CHO, Isamu, C of S, 32nd Army:—A fiery individual possessed of tremendous energy, CHO was the driving force behind the 32nd Army. Quick to anger and demanding, CHO was not universally popular but no one questioned his ability. CHO made no bones about his epicurean tastes; his cellar was well stocked with better brands of SAKE and an ample supply of scotch whiskey. Col YAHARA believes that USHIJIMA and CHO made a perfect combination, USHIJIMA acting as the balance wheel on CHO's drive.

Lt Gen FUJIOKA, Takeo, CG, 62nd Div:—Not a war college graduate, FUJIOKA came up through field commands. Quiet and conservative, he was considered the embodiment of the SAMURAI type. Like USHIJIMA he relied heavily on his C of S.

Lt Gen AMAMIYA, Tatsumi, CG, 24th Div:—In temperament AMAMIYA resembled FUJIOKA, although more inclined to exert this personal authority. Hard working and competent, he was regarded as an excellent leader.

Maj Gen SUZUKI, Shigeji, CG, 44th IMB:—The least respected of the generals, SUZUKI expressed some resentment that FUJIOKA, who graduated below him at the Military Academy, should hold higher rank. He did a competent job though handicapped by a lack of experienced staff officers.

c. Enemy Operations:

The tactical direction of the defense resolved itself into a struggle between the conservatives, including Col YAHARA, who advocated strictly defensive warfare, and a group of radicals who proposed that the Japanese take the offensive whenever there seemed to be the slightest possibility of succeeding.

An ill conceived plan for a counterattack on 8 April was proposed at a staff meeting on 5 or 6 April. At that time the 62nd Div was alone on the line, eager to take offensive action. It was proposed to bring up the 24th Div, 44th IMB, and all other party units and in one massed blow to drive the invaders to the ISHIKAKA Isthmus. The 62nd Div was to spearhead the attack, having as its objective Hill 220 NE of YONTAN A/F. The 24th Div was to follow, then veer to the east, driving up the east coast. The 44th IMB was to be held in reserve.

The plan met with the vigorous opposition of Col YAHARA and other cooler heads

among the staff officers who reasoned that even if the attack should succeed initially, the Japanese would be at the mercy of Blue NGF and bombing since no positions had been prepared in the area. Also, the south would be left defenseless against landings. The plan was accordingly dropped, reluctantly by a group of fire-eaters, the majority deciding that only a mad man could envision the success of such a venture. Another factor influencing the decision was a belief that the Blue forces might set up a defensive line S of the AWASE Peninsula, and proceed with the securing of the northern part of the island, putting off the reduction of the south indefinitely.

The proponents of aggressive action finally were permitted to attempt a counter-attack of sorts on the night of 12 April. The failure of the venture strengthened YAHARA's position as the spokesman of the conservatives.

The 62nd Div was still holding the line alone with the 22nd Regt of the 24th Div in reserve in the NISHIBARU area. On the night of 9 or 10 April plans were drawn up at a staff meeting calling for 3 Bns of the 22nd Regt and 3 Bns of the 62nd Div to infiltrate, scattering throughout the area between the lines and the objective line, 1,500 yards north of FUTEMA. The sector lines ran through the center of the island, with 62nd Div on the west and the 22nd Regt on the east. Within each sector one Bn was to occupy the northern one third of the sector area, another Bn the center one-third of the southern third. The men were to hide in caves and tombs, awaiting a suitable opportunity to attack on 13 April.

The main advantage of the attack was that it would prevent the use of Blue NGF or arty since the area would be occupied simultaneously by Blue and Japanese troops, thus enabling the Japanese to fight upon their own terms, i.e., hand-to-hand combat. On the other hand, the 22nd Regt was unfamiliar with the terrain. As it turned out, this factor accounted for the complete failure of the attack.

Col YAHARA opposed the attack and succeeded in reducing the forces participating to four Bns.

The attack was launched as scheduled. As Col YAHARA had predicted, the Bns of the 22nd Regt were bewildered by the terrain and by dawn had made only 500 yards. They were forced to retreat, suffering heavy casualties. The 62nd Div Bns fared somewhat better, one Bn advancing to TA 8378, remaining there throughout the day of 13 April and returning that night with low casualties.

On or about 20 April, after the loss of TANABARU, the Japanese began to move troops north in anticipation of a Blue landing in the YONABARU area. The 62nd Div, reinforced on the right (east) flank by the 22 Reg., was holding a line from ONAGACHI Hill 187 to the MACHINATO A/F. Even the blindest staff officer was growing aware that Blue forces would eventually break through any defenses the Japanese could establish. As yet the Japanese had not suffered crippling casualties and in the opinion of many officers the time was ripe to strike a "decisive" blow.

Gen CHO, always a proponent of aggressive action, was instrumental in the decision to stage the counterattack. CHO was vigorously supported by FUJIOKA, CG of the 62nd Div, who expressed the general desire of his men to fight the decisive action in the 62nd Divs' zone of defense. Col YAHARA opposed the attack as being premature but was over-ridden.

The plan was ambitious. The 23rd and 26th Shipping Engineer Regts were to effect counterlandings on the west and east coast respectively during the night of 3-4 May. On 4 May the 24th Div (89th Regt on the east, 22nd Regt in the center, and 32nd Regt on the west) were to launch an attack with FUTEMA as the objective. The 44th IMB was to follow the 24th Div, bearing west to the coast, thus cutting off the 1st MarDiv. The 62nd Div did not participate in the attack.

It was, it is Col YAHARA's opinion, the decisive action of the campaign. The Japanese were so weakened by its failure that they lost all hope of taking any further offensive

action. On 5 May Gen USHIJIMA called Col YAHARA to his office and, with tears in his eyes declared that he would, in the future, be guided by YAHARA's decisions.

On about 20 May it became apparent to the 32nd Army Staff that the line north of SHURI would be soon untenable. The pressure exerted upon the line from both Sugar Loaf and Conical Hill forced a decision as to whether or not to stage the last ditch stand at SHURI. The capture of Sugar Loaf Hill alone could have been solved by the withdrawal of the left flank to positions S of NAHA and, in Col YAHARA's opinion would not have seriously endangered the defense of SHURI. However, the loss of remaining positions on Conical Hill in conjunction with the pressure in the west rendered the defense of SHURI extremely difficult.

On the night of 21 May a conference attended by all Div and Brig CGs was held in the 32nd Army Hq caves under SHURI Castle. Three possible courses of action were proposed: (1) to make the final stand at SHURI, (2) to withdraw to the CHINEN Peninsula, and (3) to withdraw to the south. The first plan was favored by the 62nd Div which was reluctant to withdraw from what they thought as their own territory. Other factors favoring the adoption of this plan were the presence of large quantities of stores in SHURI and a general feeling that a withdrawal would not be in the best tradition of the Japanese Army. It was recognized that to stay would result in a quicker defeat and consequently it was discarded in accord with the 32nd Army policy of protracting the struggle as long as possible. A retreat to CHINEN was regarded with no great favor by anyone and was deemed unfeasible due to the difficulties of transportation over rough and mountainous terrain. The discussion resolved in a decision of great extent by the presence of 24th Div positions and stores in that area.

The transport of supplies and wounded began on the night of 22 May. The burden of the operation was in the hands of the 24th Tpt Regt, an unusually proficient organization commanded by a Col NAKAMURA who later received a commendation for the masterful way in which the operation was carried out. While in CHINA the Regt had been intensively trained in night driving, apparently with some success.

The occupation of YONABARU on 22 May came as a surprise to the Japanese who did not expect such a move during the inclement weather prevailing at the time, assuming that Blue infantry would be unwilling to attack without tanks which were thought to be immobilized by the mud. On 23 May elements of the 24th Div were dispatched to retake the town. The attack continued with no success on the 24th and 25th of May.

At this time the 62nd Div sector consisted only of less than a 2,000 yard front north of SHURI held by one Bn. The main force consisting of about 3,000 men was in SHURI, several hundred yards to the rear. Since the pressure directly north of SHURI was relatively light it was decided to place the Bn on the line under the command of the 24th Div and to send the rest of the 62nd Div to assist the 24th Div in the attack on YONABARU. On 25 May the 62nd Div left SHURI and travelling on a circuitous route approached YONABARU from the south, three days being required for the maneuver. The arrival of the 62nd Div failed to relieve the situation.

The mass retreat from SHURI took place during the night of 29 May. Combat units left one-fifth to one-third of their troops behind to hold the line for another day with orders to retreat the night of the 30th. A temporary line from the mouth of the KOKUBA GAWA on the west coast running N of TSUKAZAN to TA 8069 and then bearing south through KARADERA to Hill 157 in TA 8367 was occupied on 1-2 June with the 44th IMB manning the sector from the west coast of KOKUBA, the 24th Div from KOKUBA to CHAN, and the 62nd Div from CHAN to the east coast.

The 44th IMB retreated through ITOMAN, then bore east going north of MAKABE and through MEDEERA to occupy the western portion of the line based on YAEJU KAKE, arriving on 3 June. These remnants of the 62nd Div (2500 men) fell back through TAMAGUSUKU MURA and GUSHICHAN MURA occupying the sector south of MAKABE and

west of MABUNI KAKE on 4 June. The 24th Div (7-8,000) men withdrew through the centre of the island, taking up the east flank on 4 June.

The message from General Buckner, offering USHIJIMA an opportunity to surrender did not arrive at 32nd Army Hq until 17 June, a week after it had been dropped behind the Japanese lines; Col YAHARA states that the delay was normal for front-line to Hq communications at that stage of the operation. Then after showing it to his staff officers, the staff officers were unimpressed and treated the matter lightly. Gen USHIJIMA's reaction is not recorded.

d. Enemy Intelligence:

32nd Army intelligence was admittedly poor. Although a staff officer was charged with intelligence, he was hampered by assignment to other duties and by the general lack of interest in intelligence among front-line troops. Div staff officers looked upon intelligence as a minor matter; below division there were no personal concerned with intelligence. Col YAHARA admits that an unfortunate attitude that intelligence work belonged properly only to officers incompetent for operations work prevailed even in the highest echelon.

Col YAHARA states that the greatest single source of intelligence was US news broadcasts identifying units on the island and describing the general progress of the operation. Such broadcasts were monitored in TAIWAN and transmitted from there to OKINAWA.

Practically the only other source of intelligence was documents taken from bodies and wrecked tanks. Although a civil service official supposedly qualified in the English language was assigned to Army Hq, he proved himself incompetent and Col YAHARA read captured documents personally. A tank destroyed shortly after the 27th Div came into the line yielded an Op Plan of that Div. The document was taken to 32nd Army Hq where it was examined by Col YAHARA. Most of the document was not of immediate interest, however, the "Estimate of Enemy Capabilities" aroused great interest and amusement. On 5 May a Marine enemy situation map, captured during the 4 May counterattack, caused great consternation because of its accurate appraisal of Japanese dispositions. Some valuable information was taken from addresses on personal letters taken from Blue dead. The presence of the 1st MarDiv on the southern line was discovered in this fashion.

The only US POWs of which Col YAHARA admits knowledge are one Navy ensign or Lt(jg) shot down off KERAMA, and 2 or 3 unidentified fliers captured in March. The first POW was interrogated on OKINAWA and apparently revealed movements of his task force (it is not known how accurately; the Japanese accepted his account at face value) but when questioned as to future operations advised his interrogators to consult Admiral Nimitz. This POW was subsequently flown to TOKYO for more intensive interrogation. Col YAHARA can furnish no information on the POWs captured in March, beyond the fact that he thinks they were flown to TOKYO immediately to be worked over by competent interrogators. No POWs were reported to 32nd Army Hq during the operation; if any were taken they were dealt with on the spot. Orders directing units to attempt to take prisoners were issued with no results. Several Okinawans suspected of acting as US agents were turned in but, without exception, they were found to be insane.

Occasionally staff officers listened in on Blue voice transmission but, due to their imperfect English, gained no information of any value.

Indicative of the character of Japanese intelligence are two reports received at Army Hq. The first, received shortly after the 1st MarDiv moved into the southern line stated that Chinese and Negro Marines had been observed being driven to the front by tanks, presumably to prevent their desertion. A second report, received from an infiltration team, described a gala party, complete with orchestra, chinese lanterns and dancing girls, which had purportedly been seen in progress at FUTEMA.

e. Battle Lessons:

The 32nd Army staff was somewhat puzzled by certain phases of Blue tactics which

were in conflict with accepted Japanese tactical doctrine.

The Blue attack against the Japanese line was often characterized by the exertion of uniform pressure against the entire line. When weak points were discovered in the Japanese line they were generally probed by Blue patrols yet no efforts were made to effect a break-through, if only to gain a temporary advantage. This seemed at variance with what the Japanese considered sound tactics, which would advise an attack in force upon weak points with the objective of causing the enemy heavy casualties, if not of disrupting his defense. The seemingly over-cautious policy came as a disappointment to many Japanese staff officers who had hoped to force a decision once the Blue forces had engaged the SHURI defense line and before the Japanese had been appreciably reduced in strength.

Col YAHARA and other staff officers became of the opinion that the 10th Army had been committed to taking the island as cheaply as possible. In retrospect he declared that the policy was probably wise, insofar as it reduced total casualties although more aggressive action would probably have shortened the campaign appreciably.

Blue methods of tank warfare also came as a surprise to the Japanese. Col YAHARA expressed the belief of the Japanese that OKINAWA was ideally suited to large-scale tank warfare, at least in comparison with the home-islands of Japan. (In this connection, Col YAHARA remarked that the CHIBA Peninsula was probably the only area in JAPAN suited by terrain for armored warfare. The Japanese themselves find difficulty in conducting maneuvers on terrain characterized by paddy fields and irrigation systems.) The Japanese envisioned Blue tank attacks comparable in scale to those of European war, involving 4 or 6 waves of 100 tanks each. Indications that such attacks were not contemplated came as a great relief to the Japanese. Col YAHARA is, however, of the opinion that Blue superiority in tanks was the single factor most important in deciding the battle of OKINAWA.

The Japanese were forced to admit that their countermeasures were ineffective; AT guns were of little use in well-concealed positions and were soon destroyed if moved to positions with better fields of fire, suicide attacks by personnel bearing explosive charges were disappointing, while bringing arty fire against tanks was difficult because of poor communications and the undesirability of firing during the daytime when under air observation. Some comfort was derived from the observation that tanks would sometimes withdraw in the face of a show of strength or when accompanying infantry were fired upon.

At one point there was a rather wistful discussion of the possibility of retrieving a damaged tank and after repairing them to use them in the field. The scheme soon proved to be impractical. A light AT weapon such as the bazooka is badly needed by the Japanese.

The tactical maneuver causing the greatest concern to the Japanese was the so-called "horseback attack" (UMANORI KOGEKI), i.e., the double envelopment of cave positions. Although the Japanese positions were constructed so as to be mutually self-supporting certain unexpected factors entered the picture. It was discovered that double-envelopment tactics had been successful, not so much because of inherent factors in the construction of positions, but simply because troops in nearby positions were reluctant to endanger their own safety by opening fire on positions which had been enveloped. Orders were issued that an officer or NCO would remain on watch at all times in each position and that there would be no delay in opening fire upon Blue troops attacking other positions.

Flame-throwers were countered by constructing caves with the main passages at right angles to the entrance. To further minimize the effect of flame-throwers, entrances were covered with blankets, shelter-halves, or other heavy materials thoroughly wetted. Col YAHARA believes that these measures were fairly successful against brief attacks, although admittedly unable to withstand prolonged attacks.

Blue night attacks were particularly effective, taking the Japanese completely by surprise. The Japanese had so accustomed themselves to ceasing organized hostilities at nightfall, and, except for the ubiquitous KIRIKOMITAI, reorganizing and relaxing during the night, that attacks in these hours caught them both physically and psychologically off-guard. Col YAHARA believes that such attacks could have been successfully exploited to a much greater extent than they were.

The 32nd Amy had experienced considerable bombing and were reasonably certain that their cave positions were adequate protection. There was, however, general consternation at the prospect of being under NGF. Col YAHARA was informed by an arty officer that one BB had firepower equivalent to the arty of 7 Inf Divs: this naturally caused him some anxiety which was relieved only when, after the first naval bombardment of the island, he inspected the results and found that well constructed cave positions were vulnerable only to direct hits. The following conclusions were drawn as to the effectiveness against NGF, bombing, and arty fire.

1. NGF, bombing, and arty directed against an area the size of OKINAWA will not have much effect against disciplined troops in well-constructed cave positions; important positions must be such that no amount of bombing or shelling will destroy them.

2. After positions have been overrun or destroyed by the enemy dispersion is vital. All movements must be at night.

3. The final result will be by hand-to-hand combat.

The enemy's first taste of Blue arty was the bombardment by pieces emplaced on KEISE SHIMA, which caused the enemy no little annoyance, particularly since they had not anticipated any such move. Counter-battery brought against these batteries was believed to be partially successful.

The effectiveness of Blue arty was countered, successfully to a great extent, by the elaborate system of underground fortifications. Heavy bombardments, such as come before attacks caused relatively low casualties.

Blue observation planes were a constant threat to the Japanese. They learned quickly that the presence of an observation plane overhead usually presaged enemy fire. And, although they appeared to present fine targets, observation planes were tantalizingly hard to hit with small arms. Observation planes were, therefore, treated with great respect, all movements being kept to an absolute minimum while these planes were overhead.

Footnote 9.

Annex "D" to G-2 Periodic Report Number 55 XXIV Corps Captured Document (Japanese Combat Instructions)

1. Why does the enemy launch Straddle Attacks? (TN: Straddle Attacks are those directed against fixed emplacements (tombs, pillboxes, cave entrances) in which the attackers take advantage of dead spaces in the enemy fields of fire and attack from the sides and top.)

- a. There are defects in the organization of positions. The enemy, more experienced in infiltration tactics, capitalizes on our lack of mutual fire support.

- b. It is most dangerous for all personnel to stay in cave-type positions or cave-living quarters. Bell-type foxholes and, if possible, covered connecting trenches should be dug all around the cave positions. One-third (1/3) of the personnel should always be disposed at combat stations even during enemy arty and air attacks. It is immediately after these attacks that the enemy usually executes straddle attacks.

Greatest caution should be exercised especially when the enemy is close by, and immediately following a particularly fierce arty and air attack.

- c. Withdrawing into caves during arty and air attacks and then emerging to fight when the enemy approaches is extremely hazardous. If the habit of always



Naha, Capital City of Okinawa.

fighting from bell-type foxholes even while under enemy arty and air attacks are cultivated, unless direct hits are received, damage will not be serious so long as the interval between positions is sufficiently great. To seek the safer course, to shirk one's duty and take refuge in a cave is the natural impulse of every soldier, but before one notices it, security is neglected and the envelopment of our positions by a small enemy force has been made possible. There have been numerous such instances where large numbers of our troops have been put out of action and annihilated.

d. When constructing caves and cave living quarters below a crest-line, it is absolutely essential that the summit of the hill be in our hands.

2. Your fire will immediately draw fierce enemy arty and air attacks. Restraint must be exercised. After firing one or two rounds, do not change position or take cover.

a. In accordance with combat instruction, if this doctrine is not followed by everyone on the battlefield, our fire-power will be insufficient when maximum fire-power is necessary. Certain doubts will arise in the minds of the soldiers which will result in the over-estimation of enemy fire-power and of the accuracy of enemy fire. There will be loss of self-confidence. This matter has become one of vital importance. When the enemy is sighted it is necessary to wait until he is within range; then by taking the offensive to neutralize him and pin him to the ground. The enemy is weak when his is neutralized.

b. With well-developed fire-power, annihilate the infantry soldiers atop tanks and destroy these accompanying them. Approximately ten (10) infantry soldiers accompany each tank. According to previous instructions, if we were to attack the tanks, it would cause the enemy to counter with the full fire of his turret guns. The mistaken concept of trying to avoid attacking the enemy (TN: by withdrawing into caves) has greatly influenced the results of our battles.

For example, if we do not attack the infantry soldiers accompanying the tanks, they will calmly guide the tanks into position, burn out our positions with flame-throwers, and then kill the remaining men. So will our fighting become passive—the root of our defeat.

It is therefore necessary when tanks approach, to attack the infantry soldiers accompanying them with our full fire-power. Next, the tanks must be attacked by various methods. Our units have repulsed tank attacks on several occasions by annihilation of the infantry soldiers.

c. There are leaders of veteran units who when they give instructions to newly arrived troops, exaggerate enemy strength and other things so as to make an impression. Such practice causes new troops to lose confidence and aspiration for combat.

For example, there are those who favor the construction of many bell-type positions around the cave positions and those who oppose this practice and say that men who leave the caves to fight in these positions will be immediately annihilated by heavy arty and air attacks, and so, all should remain in the caves. The latter statement must not be made. Incorrect battle tactics must not be taught to newly arrived units. The behavior and instruction of veteran soldiers greatly influence the entire unit. Leaders and units must therefore take special precautions.

3. The enemy is weak. Do not fear him. The enemy is attempting to overwhelm us with his material might; however, without this might, his tactics, strength, supporting movement, and fighting spirit are weak. When we experience the enemy's material might, we are very much impressed. Though our numbers may be small, when we begin annihilating the enemy with our total fire-power, even when they are accompanied by tanks, they will be afraid to draw near.

The enemy cannot easily penetrate our position when we resist stubbornly. It is necessary for each unit to attack fiercely. Give this matter careful consideration.

ACTION REPORT
of
"KING" COMPANY,
TWENTY SECOND MARINES
14 May—15 May, 1945

At 1545 on 14 May, 1945, King Company was attached to the Second Battalion, Twenty Second Marines. At 1630 the Company had reported to the Second Battalion and was put in Battalion reserve at 7572 I (ridge West of Hill No. 1). During the night of May 14-15 the Company was called upon to reinforce "SUGAR LOAF HILL". Following is the report of this action which reduced King Company from a strength of five officers and one hundred forty-one men to three officers and sixty men.

At 1630 on 14 May, 1945, King Company, with 1st Lieutenant Fincke, Commanding Officer, was ordered to become 2nd Battalion reserve but at the same time to so deploy the company so as to form a second line of defense and be available for immediate use as reinforcements. The company was assigned the area 7572 I (West of hill No.1) where by setting in lines along the East-West ridge, a second line of defense behind 1/22 was formed. The East flank was bent back north so as to form a second line behind the right flank element of 2/22 which was on Hill No. 1. Movement into this position was made at approximately 1730, during the enemy's usual heavy evening artillery barrage, and two deaths and several casualties were sustained.

From this time until 0100, when the company began its move to Sugar Loaf, the situation on the 2nd Battlion front was becoming more critical. George and Fox Companies were down to a handful of men and still clinging to Sugar Loaf. Easy Company's approximate twenty effectives were on Hill No. 1.

At 2100 Colonel Woodhouse ordered one platoon of King Company to a position just west of Hill No. 3 to form a second line of defense. At 2300 this platoon (King Company's first platoon) was ordered to advance to the rear slopes of Hill No. 3 and from there to use grenades and weapons to dislodge the enemy located on the East slopes of Hill No. 3—a position from which the enemy was able to fire into the rear of the forces on Sugar Loaf. This platoon was forced to withdraw from Hill No. 3 at 0200 by enemy knee mortar fire. Only 10 of 24 men were left and they spent the balance of the night manning supplies that were sent to Sugar Loaf by Amphibious Tractors.

At 0100 Lieutenant Colonel Woodhouse ordered King Company to prepare to move out to reinforce Sugar Loaf. The company was alerted and moved into the corridor heading up to Sugar Loaf. First Lieutenant Reginald Fincke, U. S. Marine Corps Reserve, Commanding Officer of King Company, reported to Colonel Woodhouse at his Observation Post. The colonel summed up the situation. "The lines are extended and the Nips are counterattacking in strength. The situation on Sugar Loaf is very critical. Stand by to go to their reinforcement. Replenish your supplies."

The company arranged to get needed hand grenades and ammunition and the mortar platoon led by First Lieutenant Sanford Kurta reported to the 2nd Battalion to aid them in the firing of illumination shells.

At 0200 Lieutenant Colonel Woodhouse again called First Lieutenant Fincke and issued an order. "There are only eight men left on Sugar Loaf. If we lose it, we will have lost all we've gained and paid dearly for. Take King Company to Sugar Loaf and hold it at all costs. I want to see you up there in the morning."

Four officers, First Lieutenant Fincke, First Lieutenant James D. Roe, and Second Lieutenants Paul N. Koppitz and Wilfrid L. Higgin, Jr. and 99 men (the company less the first platoon and mortar platoon) went to the reinforcement of Sugar Loaf. By 0230 the company had reached the base of the hill with no casualties inflicted.

At 0300 the company had crept up the hill and was in position—third platoon on the left, first platoon on the right and the headquarters section completing the perimeter to the rear. The line was formed on the reverse slope; close enough to enable the men to throw hand grenades over the crest but far enough from the topographical crest to allow cover from the enemy located on prominent high ground to the front, left flank and right flank and also far enough away to allow a field of fire against any enemy coming over the sky line.

The enemy was aware of the reinforcement of this strategic hill. At approximately 0300, just as the last man was crawling into position, the entire hill was covered with a heavy knee mortar barrage. Casualties were extremely heavy. First Lieutenant Fincke had been checking the situation with First Lieutenant Peasly, who was twice wounded and whom he was relieving, when he was struck and killed. First Lieutenant Roe took over King Company. Although wire communications were run to Sugar Loaf at the time the company was proceeding to it, they were immediately knocked out as was one of the two "300" radios. The one serviceable "300" radio was the means of communicating with the 2nd Battalion, Observation Post and Command Post and Easy Company on Hill No. 1 throughout the night and next morning.

At approximately 0315, the first report was made to Colonel Woodhouse. He was notified that King Company was in place on Sugar Loaf although heavy casualties were already suffered by severe enemy mortar fire. The mortar fire was both pitric acid and white phosphorus. Enemy small arms and automatic fire was coming from the enemy held high ground to the left and right flank as well as sniper fire from Hill No. 3 and the knocked out tanks between Sugar Loaf and Hill No. 1. Illumination fire was good and must be continued. All artillery harassing fire possible was requested. The word was given that Amphibious Tractors could now come up to evacuate the wounded of both Fox Company and King Company.

Colonel Woodhouse promised prompt action on the amphibious tractors as possible. The rain continued with no let-up.

Beginning at approximately 0330 and continuing till dawn, the enemy began repeated attempts to come over the crest of the hill. Seven such attempts in force were driven back. The enemy also resorted to crawling up on the forward slopes of the hill and then tossing hand grenades. Hand grenades proved a most valuable weapon to counteract such moves.

It readily became apparent that the automatic weapons, Browning Automatic Rifles, and machine guns could be used only as a last resort. Every burst of automatic fire brought heavy enemy mortar fire. The eight machine guns King Company took to the hill were manned at all times, but all fire was held.

At 0400 two Amphibious Tractors evacuating casualties got as far as Hill No. 1, one bogged down just north of Hill No. 1, and the other threw a track. At about 0430 one succeeded in reaching Sugar Loaf and the casualties were begun to be evacuated.

Throughout the night the enemy continued his most deadly assault on Sugar Loaf—the mortar fire. All fire was in the form of heavy barrages and these varied from ten minute intervals to hour intervals. After each attempted assault was repulsed, another heavy barrage would follow. Our own friendly artillery was effective in discouraging the enemy, and it was called often, and at various ranges to confuse the enemy.

Long before dawn it was apparent that a very small force would remain on Sugar Loaf the next morning to mop up the East face of the hill.

All through the night and next morning, the terrific mortar barrage continued in intensity but decreased in deadliness as the depleted number of men made fewer targets.

At 0800 another two Amphibious Tractors arrived and more casualties were evacuated. Colonel Woodhouse also ordered First Lieutenants Peasley and Hutchins and the six remaining Fox Company men to return on these vehicles. A platoon of Dog

Company, 29th Marines, was on its way to reinforce Sugar Loaf. All moves of the Amphibious Tractors brought more mortar barrages.

By 1000 the first men of Dog Company's platoon were behind Hill No. 3 ready to take over the position held by King Company. A fire team at a time was put on the line as a fire team withdrew. At 1100 the last ten men of King Company left the hill after all casualties had been removed.

Three officers and thirty men came off Sugar Loaf.

SUBMITTED BY:

/s/ James D. Roe

First Lieutenant, USMCR.

Footnote 15.

The problem of direction: that is, the command function of the general of a division, has received very little attention in the Pacific War. The development of the staff and the necessary delegation of duties to that staff have tended to obscure the commanding general's personality and to minimize the necessity for the general's decisions. Moreover, the small size of the islands that the Marines have conquered has left little room for maneuver, and the story of such operations appears superficially to be one of supreme courage and material might alone. It is exactly true, however, that a division reflects the personality of its commanding general, and is actually his product. The only apparent exception is that of a division which, under mediocre or colorless commanders, continues to exhibit the traditions firmly established under a former general.

A study of generalship in the Pacific should be made; it is improbable, however, that it will be. Much of the material necessary for such a study no longer exists, and intense biographical research could not now be impartial and complete.

The Okinawa operation is the first large scale operation for the Marines in the Pacific in which maneuver and command decisions can be studied objectively; it represents all improvements in technique, training, and weapons which the Marine Corps had made since Guadalcanal. It should, therefore, become the object of extensive military research.

CHAPTER III

The Battle for Oroku Peninsula

CHAPTER III

THE BATTLE FOR OROKU PENINSULA

Before the Division moved south an Army photographic squadron complete with laboratory had been flown in to supplement the work in aerial photography that had been done in the north by planes from carriers. The squadron worked with and for the aerial photographic section of G-2. This section devised a card file system to cover all target squares in enemy hands whereby all enemy installations were logged in after an efficient system of interpretation had checked them. Supplementary information gained from other sources was added. By the time that the Division was ready to move in Oroku Peninsula the API section had accumulated a large store of information not only on enemy installations but on the terrain features of the peninsula. On 31 May the G-2 periodic report had a long annex on Oroku Peninsula.

The peninsula is an oblong piece of land jutting out only a little way from the mainland, but cut off from Naha by the wide tidal reaches of the Kokuba Estuary. It is about 4000 yards long and about 3500 wide; its southern edge is largely flat; the northern part and the base is hilly; the range of hills and ridges running almost north and south, cut the peninsula off from the flat coast lands to the south and make it a separate military compartment. It had no tactical signification in itself; the possession of its hills and valleys would not further the operation directly. It did have the largest and reputedly the best airfield on the island on its northeast coast, and the Army wanted the airfield for immediate use in furthering its drive to the south. G-2 had estimated that originally the peninsula had been garrisoned by from 1500 to 2000 naval troops, the special guard that the Japanese used for the protection of airfields, and the usual groups of naval personnel for maintenance of the field and the planes. The field itself had been inoperative since we landed.

There was some confusion apparent in the movements of the naval personnel on the peninsula. Some of the units had been drawn north to the Sugar Loaf Battle and had there been identified among shock groups killed; others had perhaps belonged to suicide boat groups who had tried to operate in and around Naha. When the Army began its retreat to the south, the Navy garrison had withdrawn either before them or with them to Itoman. Prisoners of war stated that there had been some friction between Navy and Army and that the Naval withdrawal had been made three days before it was ordered. The garrison had now been hurriedly sent back into position on the peninsula. From what information that could be gathered it seemed clear that the garrison had taken up defensive positions at the base of the peninsula in the expectation that we would cross the Kokuba and strike toward the sea.

To make the attack from this direction would have certain advantages: though the Japanese had concentrated their forces along the inland ridges, they could not make the most effective use of their defenses if they were attacked from the east since their whole hill defense; that is, the reverse slope defense, had been set up to oppose a landing from the sea.

To make the attack from the sea at the one beach possible; that is, from the northwest corner, meant attacking a prepared system of defenses which would not, however, be manned at first. This attack would put troops on the airfield on the first day after landing.

No matter from which direction the attack was to be made, the peninsula would be a rugged battleground; its ground features are unusual and difficult to describe in ordinary terms, like much of the terrain on Okinawa or other fairly large Pacific Islands which are a composite of coral structure and volcanic action that has been subjected apparently to successive upheavals and immersions. There are two main military cor-

ridors on the peninsula that form a gigantic L. The long line of the L lies along the northwestern coast above the Kokuba Estuary; the short line of the letter runs almost north from the southern coast along the very base of the peninsula. The point where the two lines join is the height of land; 1000 yards inland from it both valleys slope gently down to the sea. If troops fought up both corridors they would meet where the two lines joined in a kind of high amphitheatre whence they could look down on the wide fields besides the Kokuba.

Each corridor is not an open draw, however; the floor of each is blocked by numerous small hills and sharpsided little ridges of reddish clay that rise abruptly from the valley floor. A simplified diagram of the peninsula would show it something like map on facing page.

In order to make its final decision G-3 sent a night patrol of the Reconnaissance Company across from Naha into northern Oroku to probe the defenses of the Japanese, to examine the beach, and to note if possible, the number of enemy. Major Walker divided the patrol into four-man units, each with its own plastic boat and its particular mission. They were to land abreast on the southern shore of the estuary; each team was to penetrate south for a thousand yards; one team was to examine the beaches; the others were to cross the mouth of the wide northern corridor, checking on defensive installations, roads, and movements of troops.

The patrol started out after dusk, before moonrise on 2 June. There was still fighting going on in the hills along the northern shore of the Kokuba, and destroyers had been firing star shells for illumination. Though all ships had been instructed to stop illumination for the period of the crossing, one ship didn't get the word, and despite frantic radio and telephone messages, the brilliant shells kept exploding above the wide mouth of the river. The men carried their boats to the seawall, received final instructions, and pushed silently off into the darkness, their low silhouettes fitfully seen for a few hundred yards offshore in the gleams of the shells. The platoon of the Reconnaissance Company manning the outer seawall and Major Walker waited, watching the high black mass of the peninsula across the water.

After several hours mortars flared on the peninsula and there came a brief rattle of small arms fire. Early in the morning the boats began to come back one by one, the last getting in at 0300. Each team had accomplished its mission, and none had lost a man. As one team came back to the beach, it had run into a small Japanese patrol with which the men exchanged shots before they ran for their boats. The mortar shells had been thrown in the darkness in a blind attempt to reach them. The other teams had walked along the roads, past uneasy groups of civilians and near Japanese installations where they could hear soldiers talking or eating. It was an extraordinary performance.¹

On the basis of this last information, and previous intelligence, the General made his decision to attack from the sea on the morning of 4 June. The 4th Marines were to make the initial attempt; the 29th Marines were to follow as a supporting force. At the same time the 22nd Marines were to cross the Kokuba and dig in on the hills across the base of the peninsula. When the 29th Marines landed, they were to take over the northern corridor; the 4th Marines were to swing south and attack up the eastern corridor, after they had taken the airfield. The operation aimed at driving the enemy against the 22nd Marines and exterminating him. It was an unusual maneuver, however. Three regiments were to converge on a single point; the 4th Marines were to make a circuit that would bring them back almost to their starting point. The particular advantages of the plan were that it provided first of all for adequate supply of the two western regiments by sea, and later by a good supply route that crossed the Kokuba near its mouth. If the attack had been made from the east, supply would have to have been over difficult roads for all three regiments. Next, the plan provided for efficient destruction of the Japanese. Instead of being dispersed and driven outward toward the coast, they were to be driven

¹See notes at the end of chapter.



DIAGRAM OF MILITARY CORRIDORS
ON OROKU PENINSULA
SCALE - 1:25,000

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIV. U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 20

gms

steadily back on the focal centre of their resistance at the height of land above the Kokuba; they would not be able to slip back toward the mainland and rejoin the forces of the Japanese Army.

At first all supply would have to be by sea to the landing beaches. But on the same morning of the attack by the 4th Marines, the Reconnaissance Company was to attack the little island of Ono-yama which lay midway in the Kokuba channel, acting as an anchor for two bridges, now destroyed, which stretched from Naha to the shores of Oroku. Once the company had secured the island, the engineers would start repairing the two bridges to make complete a good supply route.

The first warning order of the amphibious landing had been issued on 1 June; battalion commanders had visited the lighthouse at the southern point of Naha to get as much information about the region around the landing beaches as possible. On 3 June, all battalion and regimental commanders of the 29th and the 4th met in conference to make the last plans. The troops were to embark on 68 LVT's; six LCT's and ten LCM's were to carry the tanks and vehicles. The G-4 staff made the final plans for the logistics of supply in the last 36 hours. Supplies had to be moved forward over deep mud on limited avenues of approach; dumps established in convenient situations for the constant flow of supply; and administrative control set up over the flow of boats and LVT's to and from the beaches.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 4th Marines that were to make the assault in assembly areas to the north of Machinato field. The men embarked in the LVT's at 0300 and moved out in two columns, the 1/4 outboard. The two columns proceeded south to an east-west line directly off a red beacon at the Naha lighthouse. At radio signal, each column did a column left, and within each column, each wave turned left. Again at signal, the LVT's turned right and then in wave formation drove toward the beach in a black overcast dawn, preceded by a company of Armored Amphibians, Company B, 3rd Armored Amphibian Battalion.

Interruption to smooth operation came early. The LVT's had been working constantly under pressure since the rains had begun; many of them had reached the limit of their operational range. On the trip south, numbers of them broke down and dropped out of column and wallowed helplessly in the sharp little breeze. Company commanders found themselves left behind their companies. Sometimes exchanges were made; other troop loads had to wait till other LVT's returned from the beach. Two companies of 1/4 were delayed in their initial landing. The landings were made nearly on time—at 0500, and luckily on the beach itself there was little opposition. The 2nd Battalion pushed off to the left to seize the nose of the high ridge; the 1st Battalion took the other ridge of the corridor. Twenty-four tanks and four M7's were ashore by 0630 and swung to protect the assault on the left.

Fifteen battalions of artillery and Navy ships had bombarded the landing beaches and the territory directly inland and had given some indication of our intentions, but the defenders had as yet not moved many of their troops toward the beach defenses. The first little hills were taken almost without opposition; they were empty fortresses, heavily tunneled, with machine gun sites on their slopes. One 20mm gun was firing directly down the open valley from higher ground and machine guns shot intermittently; there were few casualties at first. By the middle of the morning the troops were well up both ridges and had begun to close in with the Japanese; they were running into knee mortar fire from the reverse slopes of hills ahead. The Japanese had five eight-inch howitzers near the base of the peninsula but they were using them against the approaches from Naha. They had a new weapon against the 4th Marines; a rocket. This rocket was an eight inch shell with a rocket motor attached to its base, the whole projectile about three and one half feet long. The Japanese launched the rocket from two parallel

rails in prepared emplacements. The gasses from the propellant blew back through eight holes, two small and six large, that were cut to give a rotary motion to the rocket in flight. As the rocket rose from the launching ramp and the gases under terrific compression drove back through the holes, they produced a wild wailing shriek at two different pitches, a kind of demoniacal caterwauling. The rockets at the height of their flight could be seen clearly against the sky and the general direction of their flight plotted. At the end of ten to thirteen seconds the rocket landed with terrific concussion but very little fragmentation. The shell had had originally a projecting fuse that was supposed to explode the shells just off the ground and give them a daisy-cutter action. Usually this fuse failed to function and the shell buried itself in the ground and exploded upward. The rocket was promptly christened the Screaming Meemie, and its sound was more or less aptly described as that of a locomotive from hell. This rocket fell for the most part along the northeastern ridge; other emplacements were directed toward Ono-Yama Island and the bridges.

Ono-Yama was now in our possession. At 0500, the Reconnaissance Company had assembled at the cement warehouse near the bridge where the engineers had breached the seawall, and then crowded aboard the Armored LVT's of the 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion. The great vehicles lumbered down into the water and across to the island. In the muddy channel picric acid boiled up in the wake of the churning paddies but none of the mines exploded. Two platoons of the company took the two hills to the east; the 3rd platoon swept the flat western end of the island. By 0600 the island was secured, and the thick smoke cloud from the white phosphorous shells that had hung about it was beginning to lift. The Reconnaissance men had killed 15 Japanese, completely surprised and bewildered by the sudden assault. As the smoke lifted, the men were in entrenchments along the high ground. From then on the island was under constant fire. Twenty mm guns and machine guns commanded all roads on the island from the high ridge on Oroku, and rockets began to drop around the approaches to the bridge. The engineers who tried to repair the bridge at the very first were driven back.

By 0900, 3/4 had entered the lines in Oroku and swung to the right to overrun the edges of the Naha Airfield; the beachhead was inland 1000 yards. Already Company A of the Pioneer Battalion was beginning to unload, and to establish supply dumps inland. By 1000 two battalions of the 29th Marines were beginning to come ashore and were moving to the relief of 2/4 and taking over new territory so that 1/4 could move over to the right. The companies of 2/29 marched north; Dog Company pushed up on the ridge; Fox Company swung beyond the ridge and dug in along the shore; their responsibility extended to the top of the high ridge. Some artillery began to fall on the troops moving north and one shell fell in a group that was clustered too close together and killed and wounded nine men. That night the lines of five battalions were nearly 1500 yards inland and stretched from the estuary down to the airfield; companies were dug in on and around the ridges, covering by fire the low ground between them; the Japanese had covered all open avenues of approach with machine gun fire that was accurate and very heavy.

By the end of the day Division knew two disturbing things: 1. That the Japanese had used mines skillfully and widely. The tanks were already beginning to suffer, and for the first time the men were having to march carefully. 2. That there was an enormous number of machine guns in the hills in front of them. The Japanese had stripped the machine guns from wrecked planes, made crude ground mounts for them and used them to supplement their cave defenses. It began to seem to the Marines that there was a machine gun for every three Japanese.

By 5 June, the battalions had clearly defined zones of action that were to last all through Oroku. These zones corresponded pretty closely to the terrain compartments.

1. On the left Colonel William G. Robb with 2/29 held the territory from the top of the ridge to the estuary shore, Fox Company on the left, Dog Company to the right. Easy Company in reserve.

2. Lieutenant Colonel Erma A. Wright was attacking with 3/29 up the corridor to the south of the ridge.

3. On 5 June, 2/4 was to push through the lines of 1/4 and take over the zone of action it was to fight through for the rest of the battle; the compartment lying between the north-south corridor and the east-west corridor. Lieutenant Colonel Reynolds H. Hayden commanded the battalion.

4. The 3rd Battalion of the 4th Marines under Lieutenant Colonel Bruno A. Hochmuth was to swing south and come up the north-south corridor.

5. The extreme right of the corridor that the 3/4 was to go up was unprotected; Lieutenant Colonel George B. Bell was to take his battalion, 1/4 up this eastern ridge.

On 5 June 1/4 drove ahead, keeping a company on either side of a narrow valley up which it was working. On the right flank Able Company came under heavy fire from the hills to its right and waited until 3/4 had passed beyond and swung to flank the threatening hill; Charlie Company fought through a long narrow village perched on the ridge top all day long, taking casualties from snipers and long range 20mm fire. Baker Company followed behind clearing out caves and pockets. At the end of the day the two companies had the high ground dominating the valley between them and were approaching the solid little hill at the head of the valley. Charlie Company had taken a good many casualties, and Captain Carlson had been wounded. The rains had set in again in a steady drizzle by nightfall, and in the morning when Baker Company pushed through Charlie Company to take the hill between the companies, no tanks could be brought up for support except along the road—and the roads had been both blown and mined. The Japanese were using not only the familiar kettle mine with the single horn, but wooden box mines, and even such things as the fougasse: an oil barrel prepared on detonation to throw burning oil over a vehicle or men. By 1530 the tanks were finally brought up and the attack moved out, but darkness began to fall on the rainy overcast and the companies pulled back to the high ground. The next morning 2/4 marched into the lines to relieve them.

The 3rd Battalion had meanwhile taken the airfield. It had long been out of operation; the runways were covered with tall grass, and the field itself was crisscrossed with wide ditches. King Company moved across to the coast; Item Company edged along the hills on the northern edge. There was not much point in trying to cover the field itself; there were no Japanese on it, but it was under constant fire from long range 20mm guns and a constant target for heavy mortars that had apparently been registered in with great accuracy before the attack commenced. In this battle the 20mm gun proved a fearful weapon; it had terrific range, high penetrating power, and both explosive and armor piercing bullets. The gun was, moreover, as difficult to silence as a machine gun, since it required very little more space for its firing port. It had one disadvantage for the Japanese: it could not be easily taken from a fixed position. In Oroku the Japanese used the gun with great skill to cover the flat ground or valleys with grazing fire. A tank turret could stop the shell, but treads and portions of the side were vulnerable. In other words, the Japanese had set up a protection against the weapon they most dreaded by blocking methods of approach by mines and covering them with fire. King Company patrolled a nub of high ground next to the coast and then found that it could edge along the seawall in complete protection. The engineers had sent up a bulldozer to fill craters in the road of approach, but it was mired for most of the day. That night supplies were brought up by hand carry since LVT's could not move long the open edge of the field. Colonel Hochmuth called down an airstrike on the ridges ahead in the morning and Item Company

moved out only to come under fire from guns on the island of Senega Shima. An airstrike on the rocky cliffs of that island stopped the heavy guns, but a 20mm fired intermittently even though tanks which had got up across the airstrip trained their 75mm guns on the caves in the island.

By 7 June, Love and King Companies were before the high ridge that marked the eastern edge of the corridor that they were to march up. When they attacked they came under crossfire from hills to their left; two tanks that tried to approach along the seawall were damaged and abandoned. Division decided to throw in the 1/4 to take this ridge and guard the right flank of 3/4 as they turned and moved up the corridor.

Telling of this battle afterward, the men and officers of the 1st and 3rd Battalions spoke again and again of the cleverness of the Japanese and the skill of their combat. It seems obvious that Admiral Minora Ota had sent his best troops down to stem this flanking attack; they were too few to stop it but they took a high toll. Their positions in the various hills had long since been dug, positions, the officers said, sufficient to accommodate a much larger number of men. They had the usual caves; the narrow valleys were guarded by barbed wire and tank traps; they had a tremendous number of automatic weapons. The Japanese would resist fiercely all day long from a strategic hill; if they had been flanked or outmaneuvered they withdrew at night to the next stronghold. They took their dead and wounded with them, dismantled their guns or took them too. Until the 3/4 had reached well up the corridor they had no idea how many men they had killed. Then they came on X-Ray Hill set across the corridor, an obvious command post and found the covered trenches running along its sides filled with the dead and the seriously wounded. They knew then that they were catching up with the enemy and that the end could not be far off.

On the left flank, the 29th met a different type of resistance—and probably far poorer troops. These were dug in a complicated mass of hills that all centered on one hill mass. Their only maneuver was the night counterattack; they stayed where they were until they were killed.

This type of resistance was particularly true of what 3/29 met in the narrow valley it was slowly fighting up. Captain Gamble had taken How Company up the left ridge of the valley; Captain Tomasello worked up along the ridge to the right, in contact with the 2nd Battalion across the flat land. The company went carefully because even the fields were sown with mines, and men became alert to see the dull black horn through the long grass and weeds. On the first night the company shot several Japs that tried to push through their front which led down to Naha Airfield. Across the road the valley was uneven and dominated by two long hills set in echelon to their left with a burned village between them. From the farther hill a 20mm gun swept the valley and the forward slopes of the ridges they were on. How Company pushed forward to the reverse slope of a hill in front of them and George Company got on the high ground, but they were both unable either to maneuver or to push forward. How Company sent a fire team into the hill; the team found that it could go clean through the hill to the forward slope; the company filtered through and took up positions. From this forward slope Lieutenant Colonel Wright could plan the next moves of the battalion. Meanwhile Captain Tomasello had got a tank up to knock out the 20mm, and his men had taken Easy Hill by a side sweep. With George Company on Easy Hill, How Company came forward and took Able Hill under supporting machine gun and rifle fire. As usual, the Marines took and held the reverse slopes of both hills in assault, but they could not get onto the forward slopes both because the defenders were well entrenched and because the forward slope of each hill was under cross fire from supporting hills.

The situation on 7 June is illustrated in the accompanying diagram. 3/29 had secured what might be called the outward defenses of the valley. Directly in front of them, pro-



Sixth Marine Division Prisoner of War Stockade.

tected on all sides by supporting hills lay the main defensive position in the valley; Love Hill. On the battalion's left, Dog Company/29, had swept down their ridge and on 6 June had taken the curving hook in the ridge, called Baker and Charlie Hills. Captain Mabie had sent his 3rd platoon in from the north across a saddle that joined the hills to the ridge. His first platoon on the ridge itself had given supporting fire; his 2nd platoon crept down into the valley and made a feint at the nose from the low ground. He had used a battery of three bazookas from the ridge to keep down enemy fire. The bazookas had proved effective at nearly 300 yards. Once on the hill, however, the 3rd platoon was trapped; it could not get to the forward slope; it could not withdraw across the open saddle. Captain Mabie sent his 1st and 2nd platoons down to Jig Ridge to secure his platoon's rear, and managed to get supplies to his men after dark and re-establish wire communications.

On the right flank of 3/29, the 2d Battalion, Fourth Marines had relieved the 1st Battalion, Fourth, and was assaulting a well-defended hill named Little Sugar Loaf. Efforts of the previous day, 6 June, to take the little hill had failed. At 0730 on 7 June the 2d Battalion, Fourth Marines began its attack, coordinated with that of the 3d Battalion. Supporting weapons, such as the tanks, M-7's and 37mm guns, were used extensively while George Company circled to the right, outflanked the hill, and captured it.

While heavy machine gun fire kept both battalions pretty well pinned down 2/4 took two little hills to the front in quick succession. With all supporting weapons firing to reduce the enemy positions, Easy Company moved over into the 3d Battalion's zone of action through Item Company and attacked the first of these hills in a wide flanking action, while Item supported the attack with fire. Immediately the first hill was seized, it was found that its forward face was swept constantly by enemy fire. The company commander, Captain Leonard W. Alford, saw that he would lose too many men if he attempted to move his company down the forward face. In the meantime it had been discovered that the Japanese had dug a tunnel straight through the hill at its base.

First, a fire team was sent through this narrow tunnel and when its members had outposted the opposite opening, a section of light machine guns was sent. When these were set up, a squad of riflemen at a time went through and began to build up a line on either side of the far opening of the tunnel. From the forward base of the hill, Captain Alford quickly launched an attack to seize the next hill, which was taken with minimum effort.

Forward movement required a nice coordination of the efforts of the three battalions, which were already so close together that artillery could be used very sparingly. Even the 81mm's had to fire with great caution. No one of the companies could make an advance without coming under fire from several directions.

Colonel Wright now sent Item Company forward between the two hills to clean out the village and prepare the way for the other two companies to clean out the forward slopes of the hills they were on. By nightfall, 8 June, Item Company had the village. George Company had killed 30 Japanese who had tried to counterattack from the forward slope of Able Hill. At the same time Colonel Robb sent forward Dog Company to seize How Hill which dominated all the approaches to Love Hill on the left flank. Captain Mabie again used bazookas to fire at caves and emplacements while he sent his 2d and 1st platoons in from Jig, to take Hill Item; then under heavy smoke the 3rd platoon dropped down from Baker Hill and rushed How Hill. The platoon took and held the hill even though heavy mortar fire reduced their numbers to nine men. The left flank of 3/29 was now protected.

On 9 June, Captain Tomasello took his company out to the left and got his men on the top of Hill Oboe, while Item Company seized Hills King and George. The Japanese defended Peter Hill viciously. A platoon that Captain Tomasello sent to take it, got only

as far as the base. It began to lose men; it could not move forward or back. While Captain Tomasello was trying to get out casualties, he was wounded and evacuated. It was the third time he had been hit that day. The first shot had ripped his canteen open; the second had cut away his first aid packet. The company took Peter Hill before night. Love Hill was flanked, but still formidable.

The foregoing account gives little idea of the vehemence of the fighting or the numbers of casualties. There had been little artillery; the Japanese rockets were not dangerous when once the troops had become accustomed to their screaming approach; but the Marines were almost wholly dependent on their organic arms; the tanks could not get up because of the blown roads and the mines; even under protecting fire the engineers could not remove the mines. Heavy night-long rains made the men miserable, and heavy casualties reduced their forward momentum. Division committed its last reserve, 1/29, less Able Company. Baker was attached to 3/29, Charlie Company relieved Easy Company on the left flank of 2/29.

The next morning Baker Company supported by the 2nd Battalion/4 moved down to take Hill 53 (Baker). On 10 June, George Company assaulted Love Hill but heavy mortar fire from Queen Hill drove the attacking platoons back. Dog Company/29 on the high ridge to the Division's left had a good deal of difficulty in maintaining its stand. It was under constant fire from all the little hills south of Love.

That afternoon Able Company/29 moved in to relieve George and How Companies/29; Item Company only of the 3rd Battalion remained on the lines to the left.

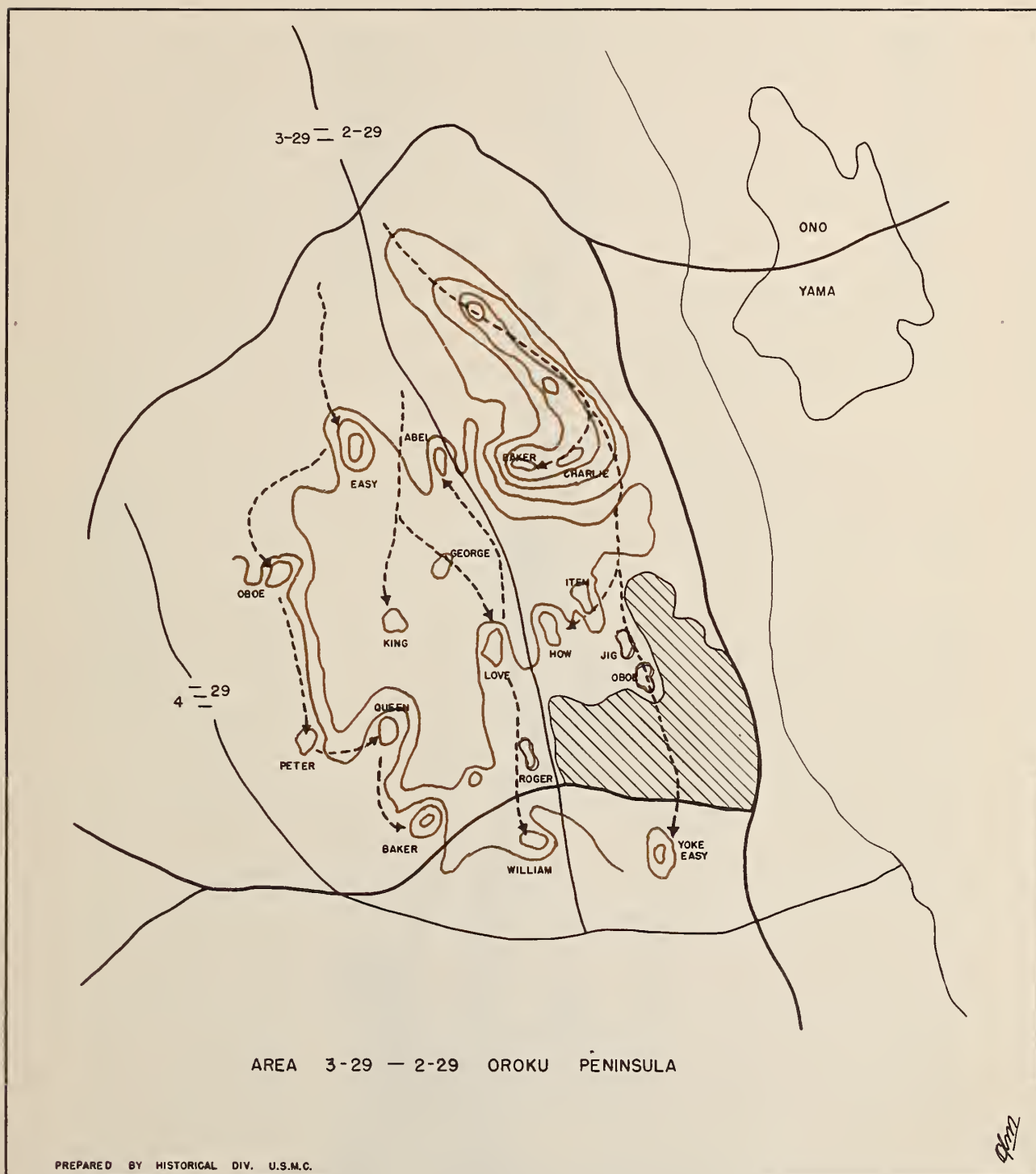
On its extreme right, the 29th Marines had reached their objective, Hill 53, which stood high on the edge of the corridor. They looked across a narrow valley to William Hill, which dominated Oroku Village between it and 2/29; the men on its top could see the shores of the estuary across sloping open fields, and the last bastion of the Japanese on their side of the corridor, Yoke-Easy Hill. Across the corridor the 4th Marines were moving on their high ridge and to the left of them were the battalions of the 22nd.

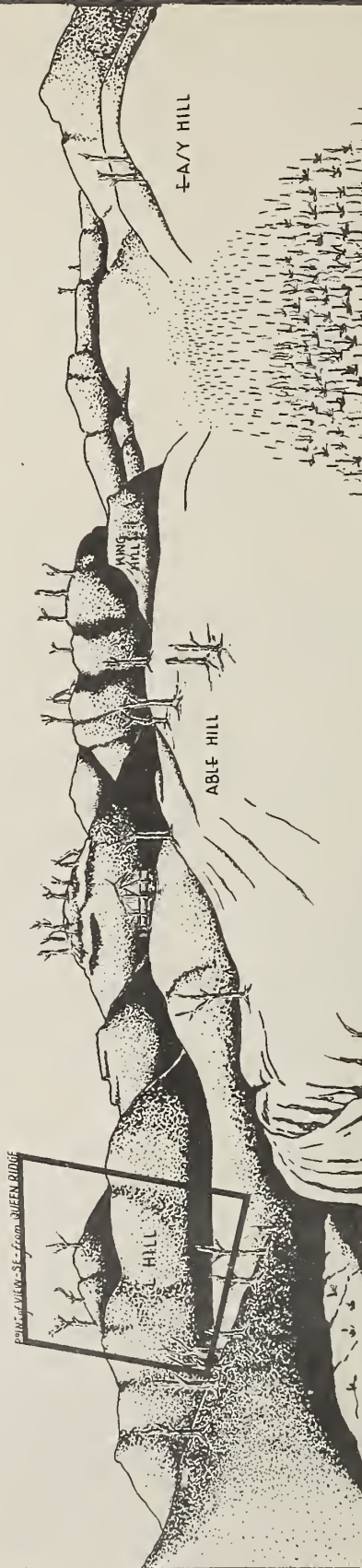
At this time General Shepherd from an Observation Point on Oboe Ridge—the high clay hill above the estuary, could watch his three regiments all moving in toward him in a remarkable maneuver. One observer from this point said that with a pair of high-powered glasses he watched a Japanese officer stick his head up above Yoke-Easy Hill and survey the approaching Marines of the 29th Marines. He turned south and saw the advance of the 4th Marines. He swung to the east and saw the 22nd Marines among the pine trees on the eastern ridges. The observer said that he could watch the Japanese officer's expression change from surprise, to bewilderment, and then apprehension.

On the 11th, Baker Company/29 started to close the corridor by attacking across it toward William Hill; Captain Barnett led his company up the hill against heavy mortar fire.

On the left of Baker Company, Able Company had entered the lines; Item Company still held the left flank of the battalion. Lieutenant Stone fed his men carefully up to the base of Love Hill; and then took the hill under cover of smoke. 37's firing from the high ridge of 2/29 had knocked out many of the caves. The same day with his flank to some extent protected, Captain Mabie sent a patrol with two tanks down into the village of Oroku. They met rifle fire, and as they returned, artillery fire from the base of Yoke-Easy Hill which destroyed and burned one tank. By nightfall only Queen Hill and Yoke-Easy Hill remained in the hands of the enemy.

The next morning Charlie Company/29, which had been put in reserve for the attack on Love Hill, and Item Company/29 together came over the forward slope of Love Hill and attacked toward Queen Hill. From the flank Able Company pushed off from Peter Hill. As it came into the narrow valley between it and Queen Hill, a steady rain of mortar shells fell on the men, and as they tried to assault the steep slopes of the hill, blocks of





ZONE of ACTION 3/29
on **OROKU** as seen from
OP on QUEEN RIDGE

demolition charges fell among the men, thrown from the high crest. The men withdrew after heavy casualties, and as they retreated, the barrage of mortar shells followed them back. Later the company re-formed and took the hill again; this time there was no mortar fire.

The 29th Marines had nearly completed its phase of the battle. The capture of Queen Hill released 2/29, which had been held motionless against the estuary at the end of the ridge it was driving down. Fox Company had moved down along the estuary in a steady march that had brought it to the open valley facing the high hills occupied by the 22nd Marines. In the town, the suburb of Naha, that lay on their side of the estuary they had met rifle fire, and there had been many caves, but by always keeping one platoon on the high ground in advance, the other platoons of the company had kept up its momentum. On 8 June, however, they stopped. When tanks ventured out into the open valley before them they came under direct artillery fire from heavy howitzers, and the valley itself was swept by machine gun fire and mortar shells.

Now early on the 12th, Easy Company with patrols from Dog Company moved through Oroku Village, and late in the afternoon Fox Company assaulted and took Yoke-Easy Hill. It was short but very fierce fight which cost the life of Captain Robert B. Fowler, their former commander. The 29th Marines now had all the high ground in the corridor. That night 3/29 moved into the lines and relieved 1/29 which had had a terrific two days with heavy casualties.

The progress of the other two regiments had already driven them to their objectives. At first, 3/22 and 1/22 had crossed the river to seize the high ground and to protect the right flank of the 1st Marine Division. Then as the 1st Marine Division pushed on in its drive for Itoman, 3/22 kept on its right flank, and in two days had cut across the base of the peninsula and reached the sea. The 1st Marine Division drove on with its flank along the beach. 3/22 came back up along its route of attack. It had taken them two days to reach the sea. On the 9th they were again in the attack.

The accompanying sketch shows the terrain they had to fight over. It was essentially V-shaped, wide toward the sea, that narrowed as it approached the estuary, and ended in two tall hills just inland from it. These two hills were really a continuation of the ridge up which 1/4 was working. In the center of the valley midway between sea and estuary were three hills, two large and one small, that controlled all movement in the valley.

Baker Company 1/22 had been attached to 3/22 on its march south. On the 8th Able and Charlie Companies were ordered out to patrol the valley and seize Hills 55-1, and 55-2. The patrols ran into a vigorous defense as they approached Hill 55-1; they rushed and took it in the afternoon, but they were so few and their ammunition was so low that they had to pull back. The next day, Baker Company returned to the battalion, and the three companies took the hill, an outpost of the strong line that the Japanese were defending in the 1/4's zone of action. Patrols worked throughout the afternoon and evening exploring routes to Hill 55-2.

On 10 June, Lieutenant Colonel John G. Johnson had brought up his battalion to support 1/22 and to take Hill 55-2. He placed George Company on high ground to the south and sent Easy and Fox Companies against the hill down the projecting ridge line that led to it. On the 10th, the two companies took the hill. Colonel Johnson had scotched the reverse slope defense of the Japanese by putting George Company in a position where it could bring under fire any movement of Japanese on the reverse slope. While these two battalions had been taking these two hills, 3/22 had moved up the valley and seized Hill 26.

The drive north toward the estuary was made the more easy because the 22nd Marines could still use artillery effectively, though they were in the odd position of facing the muzzles of their own guns.

By nightfall of 11 June the 22nd Marines had covered all the high ground in their zone of action, and were waiting to become the anvil on which the other two regiments were to knock out the last elements of resistance. The 4th Marines were already opposite them.

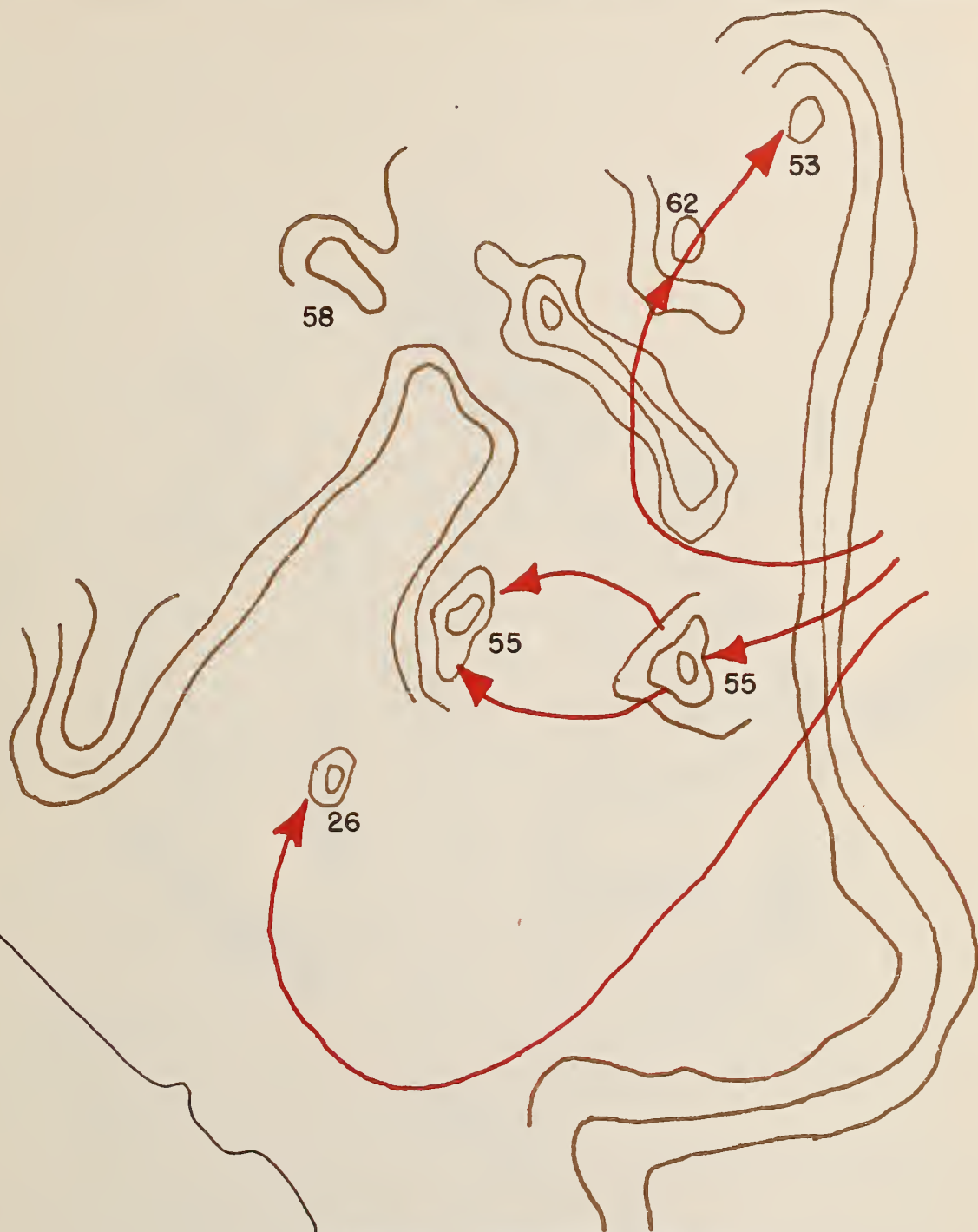
When, on 8 June, 1/4 marched into the lines it was faced by a long high ridge with its southern nose next the sea. The high western wall of the ridge was not a smooth bare slope, but a series of cup-shaped depressions with long finger ridges leading down to the west. At the village of Gushi, Colonel Bell assembled his battalion. Tentative efforts to cross the stream met heavy fire. The battalion commander got up tanks, built a by-pass around the stream. Under cover of tank fire, two companies made the assault, Able and Charlie. They were on the ridge in 15 minutes. Able Company faced north; Charlie Company whirled south to sweep down the ridge to the sea, taking most of the Japanese positions from the rear. Baker Company assembled on Able Company, and that night the three companies were on line, Charlie Company to the right rear protecting the whole flank that was open toward Itoman. At this time 3/22 was well on the way toward the sea; two battalions were facing each other, attacking in opposite directions. The next day the two right flanks would pass each other.

Once in position on the ridge 1/4 had every advantage in its attack. It used tanks along the road that paralleled its attack on the east of the ridge. In two days it had advanced up the ridge to the high ground at the end; there was only one more high hill between it and the sea. This was 3/4's zone of action.

3/4 had rougher country to fight over. Several villages lay across its path and there were crisscross ridges behind which the Japanese could fire their knee mortars, and the larger 81mm. The companies of the battalion moved rapidly up over the high ground, sending patrols through the valley below and sweeping through the villages. Their particular difficulty was mortar fire. The Japanese had carefully registered on most salient points of terrain and as soon as the Marines had occupied them, they dumped in mortar barrages. The companies had already learned the hard answer to such barrages; when the ranging shells began to fall, they pushed forward as fast as they could, but one such barrage caused 20 casualties in one company.

On 10 June, 3/4 crossed the front of 2/4 and dug in on Hill 53. It now held a long clay ridge, its flat side toward the sea. Between the battalion and the sea stood one long nose that thrust out from the eastern wall of the corridor; opposite the ridge on which 3/4 was entrenched, the nose was bifurcated; one ridge ran directly down toward the battalion; the other ridge ran almost directly west. When the battalion had taken this ridge the Division's objective would be reached. That night Japanese came down from the nose and tried to drive the Marines from the ridge. The battalion killed about 30 who had crept well up the slope.

By now the battalion front was extremely narrow. In the morning Captain McMasters led Item Company forward in assault. This ridge had good defensive positions, long since dug in it, and those defenses were manned by the last organized troops of the commanding admiral, those that had retreated up the corridor in bitter fighting. Love Company supported the attack from their hill and 1/4 gave what fire they could, but Item Company could make little headway. The slopes were so steep that a thrown grenade would roll, and machine guns covered the one good route of approach, a narrow road. In the afternoon Colonel Hochmuth sent King Company back and across the valley. The company made a wide circuit, through the lines of 1/4, and through a company of 3/22. By that time, however, the dusk was beginning. Item Company pulled back to a defensive position. On the morning of the 12th, Item Company assaulted again, with Love Company on its right. Together the three companies gained the ridge and then swept down along the nose to the valley floor.



SIMPLIFIED DIAGRAM OF TERRAIN
ON OROKAI OVER WHICH 22ND MARINES
FOUGHT — APPROX. 1:10,000

gms



ZONE OF ACTION
FOURTH MARINES
OROKUA PENINSULA
4-14 JUNE 1945

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

June 13th saw the end of the battle. Companies from 3/29, two platoons from 2/29, and the three companies of 3/4 marched down the valley to the estuary. But before the march one curious thing happened. Lieutenant Silverthorne with a loudspeaker and interpreter went out in front of the lines to try to get some of the many Japanese that he knew were in speaking distance to surrender. After a long talk, some 86 came forward. Some of the prisoners told him afterward, that they had held him under their sights for a long time till they were sure that his mission was sincere.

During the morning the companies marched on down to the seawall, killing a good many Japanese as they went and receiving only a little ineffectual rifle fire and a few inaccurately thrown grenades. The Japanese were completely disorganized, and had no desire to fight. The advancing companies would come on little groups in the cane fields who would either blow themselves up or flee to be shot down. As the march went on, interpreters went ahead of the troops and pleaded with the Japanese to give themselves up. Sometimes they were successful, and the prisoners aided in trying to urge surrender. Frequently the interpreter came back with the news that the Japanese wanted to commit suicide. The interpreter granted permission and the troops waited for the crackle of grenades or the heavier boom of explosives. There was even applause when the suicide was spectacular. Two men, for example, sat on a great block of demolitions and blew themselves high in the air. By noon the Marines were shooting the last of the Japanese, who were running to and fro along the sea wall or trying to swim the river.

The wholesale suicides of the day seemed to the Americans neither tragic or glorious, but simply inexplicable, the strange way of a puzzling enemy. This method of ending a battle by neither surrendering nor fighting made the Marines feel merely that they were opposed by an enemy that was not courageous but somehow inhuman.

The next few days the battalions spent in patrolling and resting. There were more caves to seal, and a few Japanese still wandering in the area after dark.

It was during this period that one patrol discovered the command post of Admiral Minora Ota in the sweep of a ridge that led down to the sea. The first men to explore the cave found some 300 Japanese lying neatly spread out with their hands folded on their breasts along the passageways, and in an inner room in their dress uniforms the Admiral and his staff. The men had had their jugular veins severed, apparently with a sword; the Admiral was shot through the head.

The battle for Oroku had lasted from 4 June till 13 June. It had cost 2500 casualties. Estimates of the enemy dead varied greatly. Originally by very reliable sources G-2 had calculated that there were 1500 to 2000 troops on the Peninsula. Estimates of the dead made by the regiments involved, placed the count nearer 5000, but these estimates were inaccurate, since various battalions fought over the same ground and because the estimated number of Japanese sealed in caves could not be accepted as a true total. It is probable that the regular detachments were augmented by Okinawan recruits, but that the original estimate of G-2 was largely correct. The taking of Oroku had cost us a man wounded or killed for nearly every Japanese killed, a not surprising proportion since the Japanese were strongly entrenched, skillfully led, and armed with a far larger proportion of automatic weapons than the Marines had.

With Oroku in our hands, Naha Airfield came into our possession, and all resistance of the enemy had been destroyed save in the extreme southern tip of the island where there were triple ridges which would certainly be contested.

Immediately the coast below the Naha Airfield was cleared, the companies of the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion moved in, and set their weapons along the seawall; there was still the threat of a seaborne attack from the beaches below Itoman. The sea immediately offshore was shallow and at low tide wide areas of sand, coral, and mud were uncovered. Over this wide shelf infiltrating Japanese could approach. Moreover, at low

tide, the island of Senaga Shima was linked to the mainland by a long sand spit which ran from the seawall to the island. For several days after they were emplaced, the crews of the armored amtracs shot a few Japanese every night as they tried to move along the coast or to approach the land along the sandspit. Division ordered the Reconnaissance Company to storm the island and take it on 12 June. The date was subsequently changed to 14 June. For this operation the Reconnaissance Company had attached to it Charlie Company of the 29th Marines, a platoon of amtracs, and a company from the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion.

Though no fire had come from the island after guns had first fired on the 4th Marines, the island was a potential threat both to the Division's lines of communication south, and to the movement, now taking place, of supplies onto the Itoman Beaches. G-2 had ascertained that at the time of attack there had been approximately 150 troops on the island. It was probable that some of the troops had since left the island.

The taking of the island proved bloodless but the planning for the assault and the method of making it are extremely interesting. Major Walker made full use of all supporting weapons in preparation and planned a maneuver that was clear, simple, and effective.

The island is nothing but a huge rugged block of coral; the ridge top is merely 50 feet wide along most of its length. The northeast corner of the island offers the only method of approach; at this corner there are about 60 acres of flat land, where the Okinawans had set up a few houses and had some gardens. Most of this flat land was protected by a seawall; only at the sand spit was there a method of approach for amtracs or infantry. On the 11th and 12th night patrols from the Reconnaissance Company had ascertained that the sand spit offered a method of approach even at high tide for foot troops and that this route was free from mines. On both these days heavy artillery barrages covered the island, and airplanes struck with rockets the whole landward side. A company of the Armored Amtracs circled the island and fired at cave mouths. An artillery battery brought up a howitzer and at the direction of a prisoner of war who claimed that he knew the location of the caves, fired some scores of rounds at direct targets. The night of the 13th, both Charlie Company and the Reconnaissance Company assembled along the seawall about 1000 yards to the west of the sandspit. They were to make an early dawn assault.

At 0430 artillery dropped a fifteen minute barrage on the island as the troops began to march along the beach by the seawall, part of the advanced party in amtracs. At 0445, artillery laid heavy smoke over the island, the last shell to fall at 0500 as the troops approached the island. Upon landing the Reconnaissance Company was to climb to the ridge top and move down its whole length. Charlie Company was to hold the lower ground just below it. By the time the smoke had lifted the two companies would be in position to attack.

The attack went smoothly. The amtracs rumbled onto the beach just as the last shell landed—uncomfortably close to 1st Lieutenant Robert L. Autry who was leading the 3rd platoon. The troops deployed and by the time the smoke was lifted, the island was ours. Two Japanese had been killed. The Reconnaissance Company was two days on the island. Investigation by patrols disclosed, five 127mm antiaircraft guns on the shoulder of the cliff, with a technically sound firing control center and an intricate system of caves that covered the whole landward side of the island with numerous firing ports for 25mm guns and heavy machine guns, 13.2's. These caves had hardly been touched by the artillery, though some of the communication caves had collapsed. The living caves on the other side of the island were still intact. The island was protected by a series of mine fields and the flat land below the cliffs where there was presumable room for troops to deploy was thoroughly booby-trapped. The only safe route of approach had been the sand spit; mines were taken up ten feet either side of the amtracs treads.

With the conquest of the island, Oroku Peninsula was secured. The Division Command

Post moved from Amike to the ridge on the south shore of the Peninsula, and the 4th and the 29th were bivouacked along the seawall or in the hills north of the airfield. For these two regiments there was a brief pause when they could wash clothes, and catch up on sleep. Behind the Division, Corps had moved into Naha. The harbor was being rapidly readied for use, and the whole vast supply system began operations to bring forward the ammunition, food, and water that Division was to need in the south when it was committed below Itoman. The men for the moment were in ignorance of these plans; they expected that the 22nd Marines would complete the operation for the 6th Marine Division. The 22nd Marines had been committed, on the 17th of June.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Footnote 1.

Below are listed the men of the Division Reconnaissance Company who made the night patrol to Oroku Peninsula and penetrated as far as the Naha Airfield, a remarkable exploit which demanded cool skill and high courage.

First Team:

Corporal John G. Watson
Pvt E. Waters
Pvt Lyle W. Phillips
Pvt R. M. Wilson

Second Team:

Corporal Gardner C. O'Brien
Pvt Elbert C. Woodhams
Corporal Arthur C. Rule
Pvt J. Pushu

Third Team:

Corporal Walter I. Curtis
Pvt Raymond L. Keel
PFC Charles R. Morley
Pvt Robert L. Phillips

Fourth Team:

Corporal H. R. Hays
Pvt G. F. Rivers
PFC P. A. Rallis
Pvt John D. Kvaase

Each team manned a plastic boat.



Bridge To Oroku



CHAPTER IV

The Battle in the South

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE IN THE SOUTH

In this last drive to secure the southern tip of the island, the Ara Saki Peninsula, Corps had assigned to Division a very narrow front—barely a thousand yards. On this narrow front there was no room for regimental maneuver. The last battle for the island could be called a battle of momentum; the problem that faced the Division was that of driving down over three ridges to the sea, taking each ridge by frontal assault, since there was no room to move on the seaward side, and within the Division's zone of action, no eastern end to the ridge to envelope. General Shepherd planned to use his three regiments; the 22nd Marines would seize Mezado and Kuwanga ridges. As they lost their forward drive, the 4th Marines were to pass through their lines and assault Kyamu-Gusuku Ridge. As they came to grips with the enemy the 29th was to press on to the very tip of the island. Division could keep up the momentum, a constant forward movement of the troops by always keeping fresh troops on the line, and by leaving troops once engaged to mop up the areas they had initially assaulted.

The interim on Oroku Peninsula for the 4th Marines and the 29th Marines disclosed an alarming thing that was happening within the Marine Corps. No rotation plan had ever been put into complete operation within the Corps; many of the men who had been casualties at Sugar Loaf had been out of the States for 30 months. The replacements that were now sent in to make up our losses were either fresh from boot camps and inexperienced or men who had been long in camps within the States where they had received ratings that they could not support in battle. There were platoon sergeants from a fire department, sergeants from guard companies, a carpenter. Here on the peninsula the companies had to set up weapons classes to teach the newcomers such things as stripping an MI or a carbine, and the incoming non-coms had to be given tasks that they could perform even though it meant that their ratings were ignored. Already in Oroku and during the last of the battle for Naha it had become obvious that the newcomers were untrained; officers had to expose themselves unduly in placing these newcomers in the lines and superintending them; there had been casualties that were due to inexperience and failure to take advantage of cover or concealment. This situation was now made worse by the addition of many new officers and men, the difficulty of building a new organization on the very verge of the new battle itself.

As the 4th Marines prepared to march south, the weather turned hot; the full summer tide had approached, the thermometer soared, and out of the sea wind, the coral ridges and dirt hills became almost intolerably hot. The 22nd Marines were already in the lines, and many of the men had begun to suffer from heat exhaustion.

Colonel Harold C. Roberts had planned the attack on Mezado Ridge and Hill 69 that lay immediately beyond it. The regiment was to attack on a two battalion front; as these two battalions secured Mezado Ridge, 2/22 was to pass through their lines and assault Hill 69. From Hill 69 the assault was to jump off for the reverse slope of Kuwanga Ridge.

The accompanying diagram, a somewhat simplified copy from the official map, illustrates the terrain features that faced the attacking battalions. There were two long ridges, Mezado Ridge and Kuwango Ridge, with Hill 69, a ridge rather than a hill, set almost at right angles to them and between them. Mezado Ridge within the Division zone of action had two small peaks on it. The inner peak 3/22 was to assault; King Company

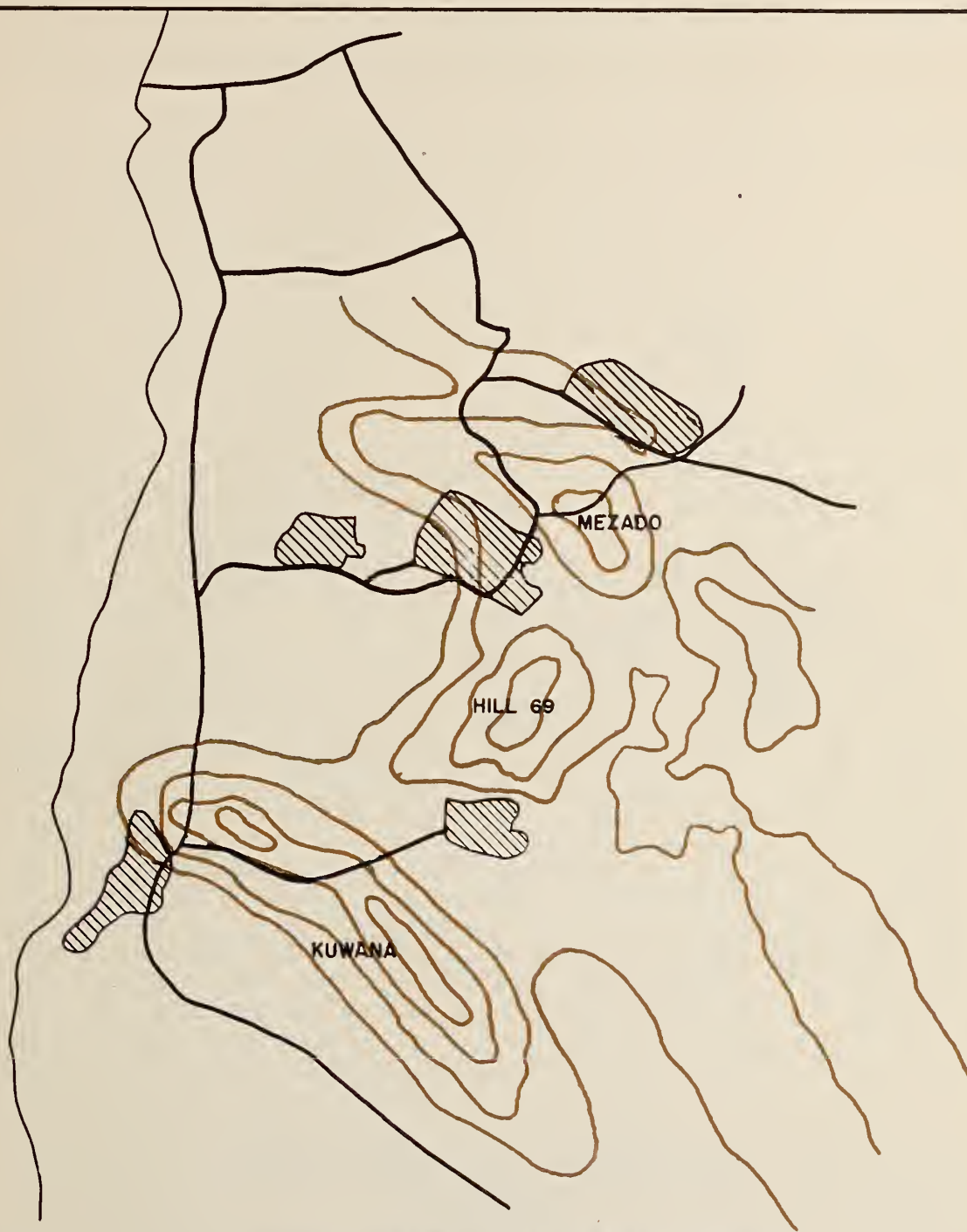
was to attempt to get around the lower western end; Item Company, supported by Love Company, was to attempt a frontal assault on the eastern end. The 1st battalion had very much the same sort of maneuver; Charlie Company was to march down along the coast road and attempt to envelop and assault the seaward nose of the ridge; Baker Company attacked to seize the high ground at the other end of the ridge.

On 16 June the two battalions of the 22nd Marines relieved the 7th Marines in their lines on Kunishi Ridge just beyond the Itoman Town and just below Mezado Ridge. When in the morning Charlie Company attempted its envelopment, it ran into such heavy fire that the company was withdrawn. The frontal assault of Able and Baker Companies was held up by two machine guns, one in the sector of 3/22 on the western edge of the peak, one on the little peak that dominated the whole left flank of the battalion. Finally a platoon sergeant in Baker Company took a platoon with a MG section up through a shallow ditch past the lower machine gun and gained the top. Once he had secured the highest point, the other companies could fight down the length of the ridge; the forward slope of the ridge was still in enemy hands. When on 19 June the 4th Marines passed through their lines, the battalion had full possession of the ridge. It took them three days of difficult fighting to get it. On 18 June the three companies worked along both sides of the ridge toward the sea, blasting and blowing caves, meeting fire not only from the ridge itself but from the heavy undergrowth on the other side of the coast road along the sea.

On their left 3/22 had carried its attack out as planned, with Love Company following King Company over the top of the peak. Item Company on the right flank could not move forward into the heavy machine gun fire it faced. After the other two companies had secured the peak, Item Company pulled back and followed up their route of approach. Before the three companies lay the valley containing Mezado Ridge, and Hill 69, their next objective. At 1400 Lieutenant Colonel Claire W. Shisler called down an artillery barrage on Hill 69. He planned to send Item Company down into the valley from the eastern edge of the Mezado Ridge; King Company was to send a patrol to the northwest of the ridge to cover the approach of Item Company. By 1620 Item Company held the hill. The Companies tied in that night with Item Company still on the hill; King Company on the southern edge of Mezado Ridge; and Love Company linking with the 1st Battalion, 22nd Marines. Easy Company of 2/22 marched up to hold the left flank of the battalion to tie in with the 7th Marines.

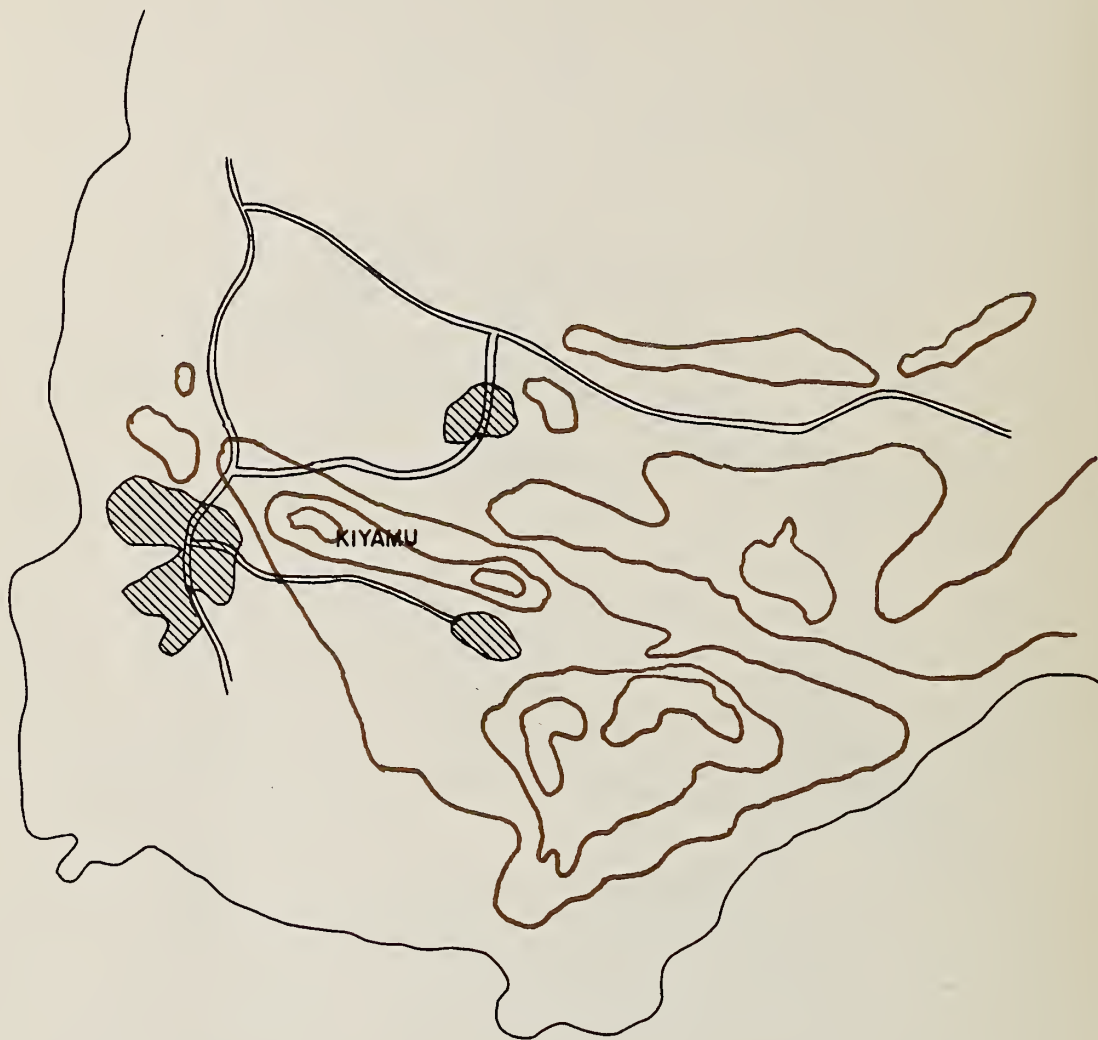
On 18 June 2/22 prepared to march through the lines of 3/22 and to assault Kuwanga Ridge. Lieutenant Colonel Johnson planned to send three companies into the assault in column, with Fox Company in reserve ready to aid either company that needed help. The companies were to march in column till they reached the saddle at the middle of the ridge; then Easy Company was to swing left and George Company right, each to assault the high ground before it. There was one unknown in this whole equation of attack; the forward slope of Hill 69 was not yet secured, and there were indications of many caves and concealed positions on that slope. The attack took off at 0800 after smoke had thoroughly covered the forward slope of the hill and the valley between it and Kukanga Ridge. With the aid of tanks and M7's the companies moved forward quickly and by 1037 reported that there were no longer Japanese on the ridge. Both company commanders and platoon leaders had studied Kuwanga Ridge from the top of Hill 69 and were thoroughly familiar with the maneuver that they were to make.

While the forward companies of 2/22 were holding Kuwanga Ridge with but little resistance and only slight mortar fire, Fox Company in reserve on Hill 69 was in trouble. Fire from concealed positions near the company CP had wounded Lieutenant Flynn, Lieutenant Garome and five or six other men. This was at 1045; at 1310 Lieutenant Flynn was dead and the company had not yet been able to either to evacuate the casual-



HASTY SKETCH OF MEZADO RIDGE,
HILL 69, & KUWANGA RIDGE
NO SCALE

Chm



HASTY SKETCH OF KIYAMU RIDGE
& SOUTHERN END
NO SCALE

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 25

gman

ties or get stretcher-bearers and plasma even though a platoon from 3/22 had been sent up with tanks to extricate the company headquarters. At 1430 Colonel Roberts who had climbed the hill to the Command Post was killed by a sudden burst of fire from a well-camouflaged pillbox that had not before been spotted.

On the night of the 18th, 3/4 came up on the left of 2/22 on Kuwanga Ridge to help hold the line and prepare for an attack on the following day. The 22nd Marines remained for the rest of the operation on their two ridges, cleaning out caves. On the reverse slope of Mezado Ridge, 3/22 found a huge cave. From it in the course of two or three days, they urged about 150 civilians. The cave was a vast underground hospital.

While the 22nd Marines were engaged in their final battle, signs of peace had begun to appear on Oroku Peninsula. In the open fields to the east of the airport an outdoor screen had been set up and the men from surrounding units saw a double feature in the dim moonlight. From the ridge that they faced they could see tracer bullets; destroyers behind them were shooting out star shells over the lines of the 22nd Marines, and on the ridge where the 1st Marines were fighting, there was the occasional burst of red fire from a flame-thrower very brilliant against the black hills. Then on the night of the 17th the men were served great portions of frozen steak that they hacked up and cooked in improvised mess gear; in the morning they had eggs and a warning order. By noon the long columns of the 4th Marines were moving down the dusty road, the 3rd Battalion in the lead; the 1st Battalion next, and the 2nd Battalion last. They marched about six miles down the road to where a bridge had collapsed under the weight of tanks, and then swung inland for another mile where the 1st and 2nd Battalions bivouacked on high slopes by the bank of a muddy little mountain stream. The 3rd Battalion moved out that night to take its place in line; the other two battalions had word that they would move at 0400 to make an early morning attack beyond Kuwanga Ridge.

In the morning they moved through the lines of 1/22 on Mezado Ridge, through the burnt little village of Mezado and over to Kuwanga Ridge. From the ridge they could see the objective, the sharp cliffs of Kyamu-Gusuku Ridge, barely two thousand yards from the end of the island. Between them and the ridge was a lower nose which ended in a village directly in front of 1/4. The 3rd Battalion advanced to take the higher portion of the ridge to the left; 1/4 struck across the open fields to secure the village in front of it, Charlie Company in assault. A machine gun fired down the valley, but the men of the company got across and into the village with only one casualty. The village had been shelled and burned. It had been the site of a mortar battery now silenced. The battalion waited while the tanks came up for the assault on the next village and the last ridge. Here the Marines ran into the first of many large groups of civilians apathetic from much shelling and bombing; many were seriously wounded and could not be moved from the shelters in which they lay; many others started the long march to the rear; the roads were black with hobbling figures. On the left 3/4 came abreast after a shrewd firefight, and on the right 2/4 moved with little opposition.

Kyamu-Gusuku Ridge consists of two parallel ridges; the first somewhat lower than the second; only a very narrow draw separates them. The 1st Battalion marched through another village and then attacked the northern ridge. They came under small arms fire as soon as they moved into the fields, and on the ridge mortar shells began to fall; the stream of walking casualties to the rear swelled in size. Late in the afternoon Charlie Company had the lower ridge, and the men settled into positions for the night thankfully. The heat had been worse than the fighting for most of them. Salt tablets were handed around by corpsmen and lessened the number of near exhaustion cases. Still, men were hopeful that the next day would prove no worse than this, and that the last defense would be disorganized.

From behind the ridge and across the narrow valley, the battalion commanders recon-

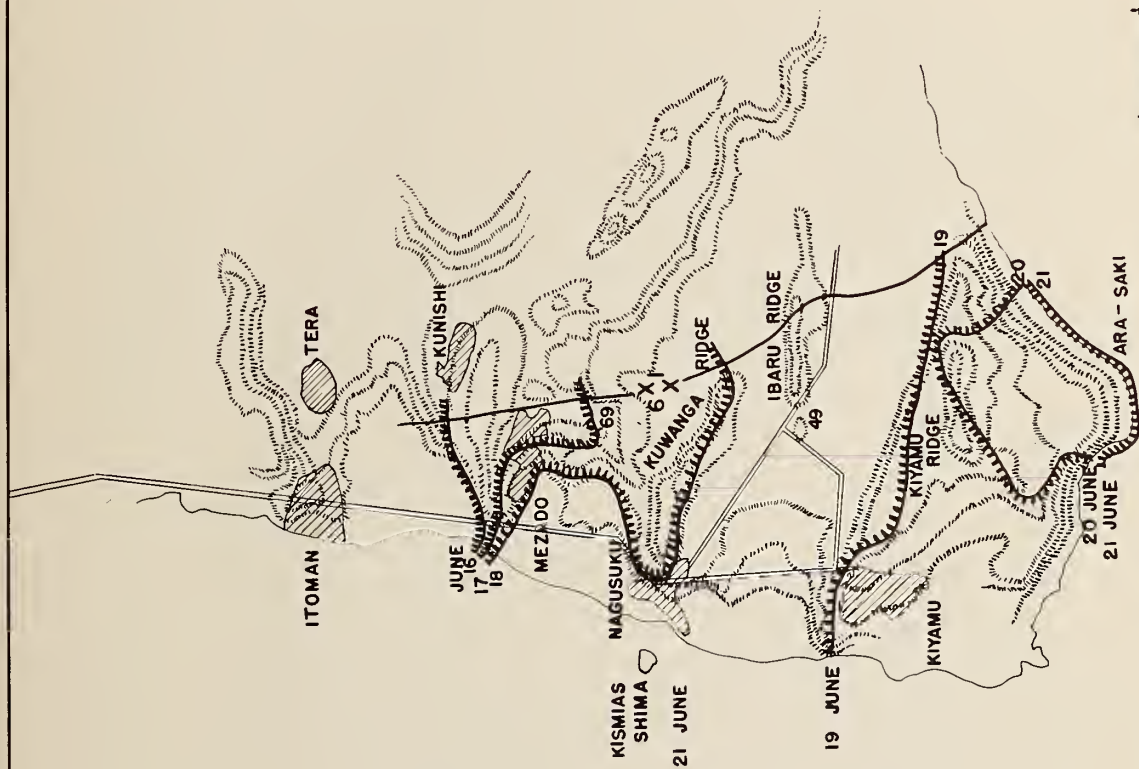
noitered the ground the next morning. What they faced was really the northern face of a raised plateau which extended down to and into the sea at the southern end of the island in a broken line of undercut coral cliffs. The face of the plateau was rough and jagged; there were obvious caves and pillboxes before them and almost no covered routes of approach. Three roads traversed through the ridge; one near the sea, in the sector that 1/29 was taking over; one in 2/4's sector where a narrow road crossed the valley on an embankment and cut through a narrow defile where a great hole had been blasted into the road surface, and one in 3/4's sector where a similar road went up the ridge in a series of spirals. None of these roads was of any use until we had the heights. For the 2nd and 1st Battalions of the 4th the only method of attack was frontal.

Colonel Bell sent Charlie Company diagonally across the valley against the cliffs and fed Baker Company behind it. There was small arms fire up and down the valley, and when the men reached the cliffs, fire from concealed positions among the crags at the summit and from behind great boulders at the base. Mortar shells began to drop in the valley and on the ridge to the north of it. On the left 3/4 faced the same difficulty, but Colonel Hockmuth could send Item Company east into the sector of the 8th Marines and onto the flat land behind the cliffs. King Company worked along the face of the cliffs cleaning out one huge underground barrack. The defense had originally been built to face the sea; the Marines were really attacking from the rear. Rocks and crevices, however, gave sufficient cover for large numbers of riflemen. Charlie Company had between 50 and 60 casualties as the afternoon drew on. The executive officer of Charlie Company had gone up to take over a platoon when the platoon leader was wounded. From the cliffs above, Japanese were waving a white flag; with an interpreter Lieutenant Walter G. O'Brien went out to interview them. Both interpreter and Lieutenant O'Brien were shot by a concealed rifleman; Lieutenant O'Brien died the next day. Later in the afternoon Able Company came into the lines to tie in with 3/4 on the left of Charlie Company. Lieutenant David Schreiner went down the valley with a radio man to pick out positions for his men and was shot by riflemen concealed in a great crag above him. Lieutenant Lawrence S. Bangser, the CO of Charlie Company, went out with a fire team to rescue the two and lost one man killed and one wounded in the process. In the dusk the stretcher-bearers brought Lieutenant Schreiner behind the lines and corpsmen vainly tried to save his life with plasma. He too died the next day.

On the right 2/4 was attempting to drive tanks through the narrow defile before them. The Engineer Battalion sent up an armored bulldozer to fill the hole in the road; two fire teams, one on either side of the road, waited to protect him. But a Japanese soldier appeared on the crag and as he was cut in two by BAR's dropped a satchel charge in the hatch of the machine which destroyed the bulldozer and killed the driver. The day ended disastrously except on the left flank where the 8th Marines had driven through to the coast and where 3/4 had doubled around the ridge and prepared the way for tanks to follow. For the night the other two battalions of the regiment withdrew to the forward slope of the northern ridge and set up their defenses. During the night there were signs of a breakdown in morale among the Japanese. All night long single Japanese tried to drift past the foxholes of the men and get north. A good many were killed.

By morning the end was in sight; 1/29 with 2/29 in support had driven around the right end of the line and through a village. Tanks streamed through behind these two battalions; others came in through the gap that 3/4 had opened on the other end of the lines. The two long lines drove toward one another, then swung and headed north toward the ridge. Before them they drove or killed scattered groups of Japanese. Patrols from the battalions cleaned out or sealed caves; the battle for the ridge was over.

That day 1/29 assaulted a low ridge farther south and lost the company commander



BATTLE FOR ARA-SAKI PENINSULA 16-21 JUNE 1945 OKINAWA

PREPARED BY HISTORICAL DIVISION U.S.M.C.

MAP NO. 26

of Baker Company, Captain Barnett, and then swept on nearly to the sea; 2/29 began to work through the dense low jungle that lined the coast, methodically burning out the patches of green growth with flame-throwing tanks. On the sea edge the armored amphibians came down and began to blow caves that lined the shore.

On 21 June, the battalions of the 4th Marines were pulled back to a defensive line and started patrolling the area before them. To the south 1/29 on extensive patrols began to find group suicides, and wandering unarmed little groups that sometimes surrendered. There were many civilians straggling north through the Marines' lines. Among them many soldiers, stripped to their shorts. On the afternoon of the 21st, George Company, 22nd Marines, the company which raised the flag on Northern Okinawa, raised the same flag on the southern tip. The company had been attached to 1/29 for this purpose. At 1027 Division declared that its sector of the island was secured; at 1305 the conquest of the island was officially proclaimed.

Though organized resistance had ceased, there was still a long period when the battalions remained in the southern part of the island and carried out daily patrols; men were killed and wounded, and a great many Japanese killed or made prisoners. On 23 June a patrol from Able Company/29 pushed through the heavy jungle belt at the very tip of the island and came out on a broad, pitted point crowded with Japanese soldiers and civilians. The final spirit of resistance was broken; the more fanatical of the soldiers straightway blew themselves up before the stoic eyes of the civilians; nearly 200 surrendered. The surrender was more or less symbolical of the crushed spirit and hopelessness of the Japanese soldier. In the south, soldiers tried to go through the lines at night; and occasional groups fought when they were cornered. But the situation was different from that on Saipan or Guam, for example, where groups took to the hills for long continued resistance. In the north, however, the 27th Division reported continued guerrilla activity.



For Those Who Made The Supreme Sacrifice.

CHAPTER V

Finale

CHAPTER V

FINALE

Shortly after the island was secured, the battalions of the 4th Marines were withdrawn to Oroku Peninsula. The 29th Marines remained at the southern end of the island methodically patrolling and killing those Japanese who continued to resist. Planes had dropped many thousands of propaganda leaflets, however, which were having an effect. From an LCI that steamed slowly along the coast, interpreters broadcasted pleas for surrender and many civilians and soldiers in the caves under the coral cliffs came out and were evacuated in landing craft. The 2nd Battalion of the 29th Marines continued the laborious work of driving down the coast through the narrow but dense band of jungle along the road. Flame-thrower tanks drove the Japanese before them and out into the open so that there were few casualties among our men.

By July 1 all battalions were in bivouac areas; the 22nd in the hills north of Itoman; the 29th in the northern part of Oroku next the estuary. Galleys began to operate; the men had nearly two weeks of waiting before they began to embark for the voyage to Guam, the rehabilitation area. Here a camp site already laid out with roads, plumbing, tent platforms, and basic buildings awaited them—something of an innovation in the history of the Marine Corps in the Pacific.

In the intense sunlight of midsummer, and under the blanket of heat, the men slept in their pup tents on the dusty, shadeless hills. With the appalling vitality of youth, some played soft ball or volley ball, dripping and sweaty, stripped to the waist. Those with 29 or 30 months overseas talked of home.

By the 1st of August all the units were on Guam, and the beginning of training for a new operation were under way. The first news of the atomic bomb seemed like something out of a dream; men discussed it but refused to give it validity in their minds; they still talked as if the war were endless, and down the coast at Ylig Bay, the 3rd Marine Division had finished its training and was preparing for the last Divisional maneuvers before it embarked for an attack on Kyushu. The news that Japan had sued for peace released a long pent-up tension. There were men in the Division who had seen the preliminaries to the war in Iceland; others who had watched the Japanese and American fleets battle off Guadalcanal on 15 November 1942, or heard bombs drop in the black night on New Georgia. They had seen the end after that far-off beginning, and they now suddenly could begin to think of picking up their civilian lives again. The end had come to as fine a fighting force as the world had ever known, to an organization formed largely of reservists who had taken up war and learned it thoroughly in the past years.

According to its official report the Division on Okinawa had killed 20,532 Japanese soldiers and taken 3,307 prisoners of war. It had lost in killed and wounded 7,822 enlisted men and 400 officers. Of these 1,622 were killed; 77 officers and 1,545 enlisted men.

23,832 men had landed with the Division on April on the beaches before Yontan Airfield. If the casualties are measured against this number, the percentage would be 35%. Of the 8,222 wounded and killed, 1,622 were killed, or approximately 20%. But these figures give no true indication of the intensity of the battle or the opposition that the Division faced. Casualties are of necessity heaviest among the front line troops; that is, in the

three infantry companies of the battalions. Casualties listed by battalions give the following figures:

	KIA	WIA	TOTAL
<u>4th MARINES</u>			
1/4	95	513	608
2/4	170	568	738
3/4	117	646	763
<u>22nd MARINES</u>			
1/22	133	548	681
2/22	127	478	605
3/22	29	681	710
<u>29th MARINES</u>			
1/29	97	487	584
2/29	130	496	626
3/29	165	579	744
TOTAL			6,059

The average percentage of losses would here be 75% on the basis of a T/O battalion strength of 918—a strength which was rarely attained. Actually if all casualties were listed: non-battle casualties, combat fatigue, and sickness, the percentage of losses would run close to 100% for some battalions. Here again the figures do not give an accurate picture of what happened to companies. If one counted the number of replacements fed through a company during the operation, he would find that replacements would total more than the original T/O strength of 235. One company commander, it is reported had 500 men pass through his organization between April 1 and June 21, 1945. In other words, those companies, like George Company of the 22nd Marines which bore the brunt of certain attacks, saw an almost complete turnover of personnel. The accompanying charts prepared by Lieutenant Commander Philip Solomon show the progress of the operation graphically and the cost the Division had to pay for certain of its objectives.¹

Yet compared to other Marine operations in the Pacific War these losses are not heavy; the momentum attained and kept by the Division, the constant forward motion of battalions, made losses lower than they would have been if the lines had been static, suffering under heavy restricted artillery fire. The significant feature of the drive southward was the slow but steady throttling of the enemy's fire power, as the troops cut through his defensive positions and flanked his long range guns. This momentum attained

¹See notes at end of chapter.

kept the losses of a frontal attack low. Phase III allowed the Division very little room for maneuver for elements larger than a battalion; the areas assigned to the 6th Marine Division were rigidly limited and in its zone of action there was no possibility of any large scale maneuver, with the one exception of Oroku Peninsula where regiments were deployed according to the Division Commander's plan. The Division was used by the Commander of the Tenth Army, Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, for the strategical purpose of flanking the whole line of the enemy's defenses; the Division itself had little choice of tactical maneuver.

What happened to the 6th Marine Division at Okinawa had happened to other divisions in the Pacific; it came back to a rehabilitation area completely different in personnel from the Division that went out from its staging area. This time, though, it was different. The men lost were veterans, as experienced and skillful as any the Marine Corps had. They were gone and they could not be replaced.

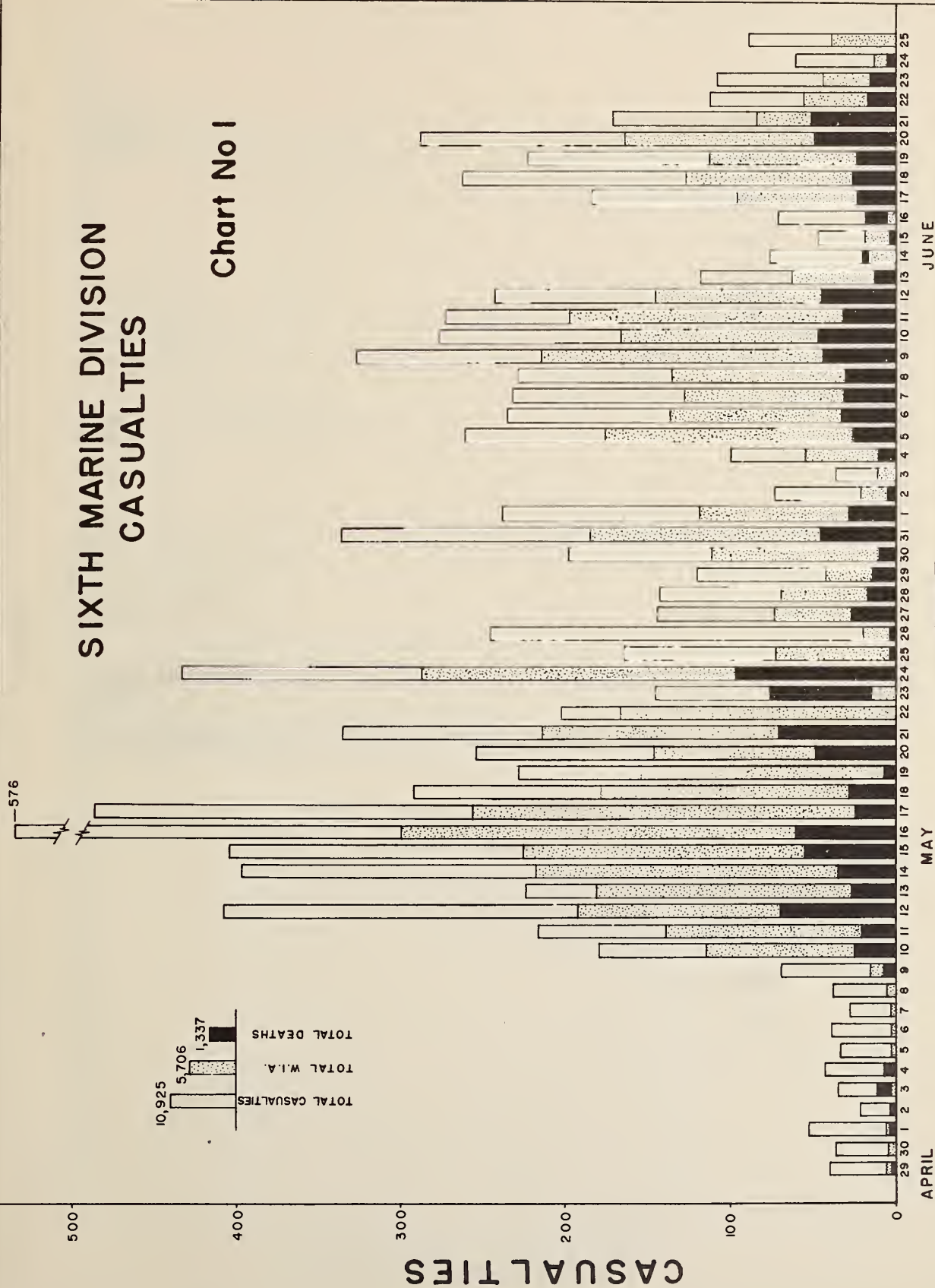
Sugar Loaf Hill will probably remain to the most of the men of the 6th Marine Division the symbol of the Okinawa Operation. Long after the troops had swept past, it remained a grim and dreadful monument to what had happened there. Viewed from across the valley the hill looked as gaunt as before, but by now the rains had washed away the foxholes or filled them; after the rains the grass had started to sprout here and there, but the hill was now dusty again after long, sunny days. Along the crest of its fateful forward slope lay a line of rusted and battered Marine helmets, some torn apart by shrapnel, others pierced by bullets. Down the slopes from the helmets were windrows of the dried bodies and white bones of the Japanese who had died there. The place was very quiet and very vacant in the brilliant sunshine.

Not many miles north of the hill in the 6th Marine Division's cemetery lie the bodies of those who died here. But it is the curved shoulders of this hill that will remain their true monument.

APPENDIX

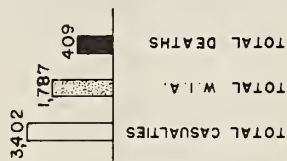
SIXTH MARINE DIVISION CASUALTIES

Chart No 1

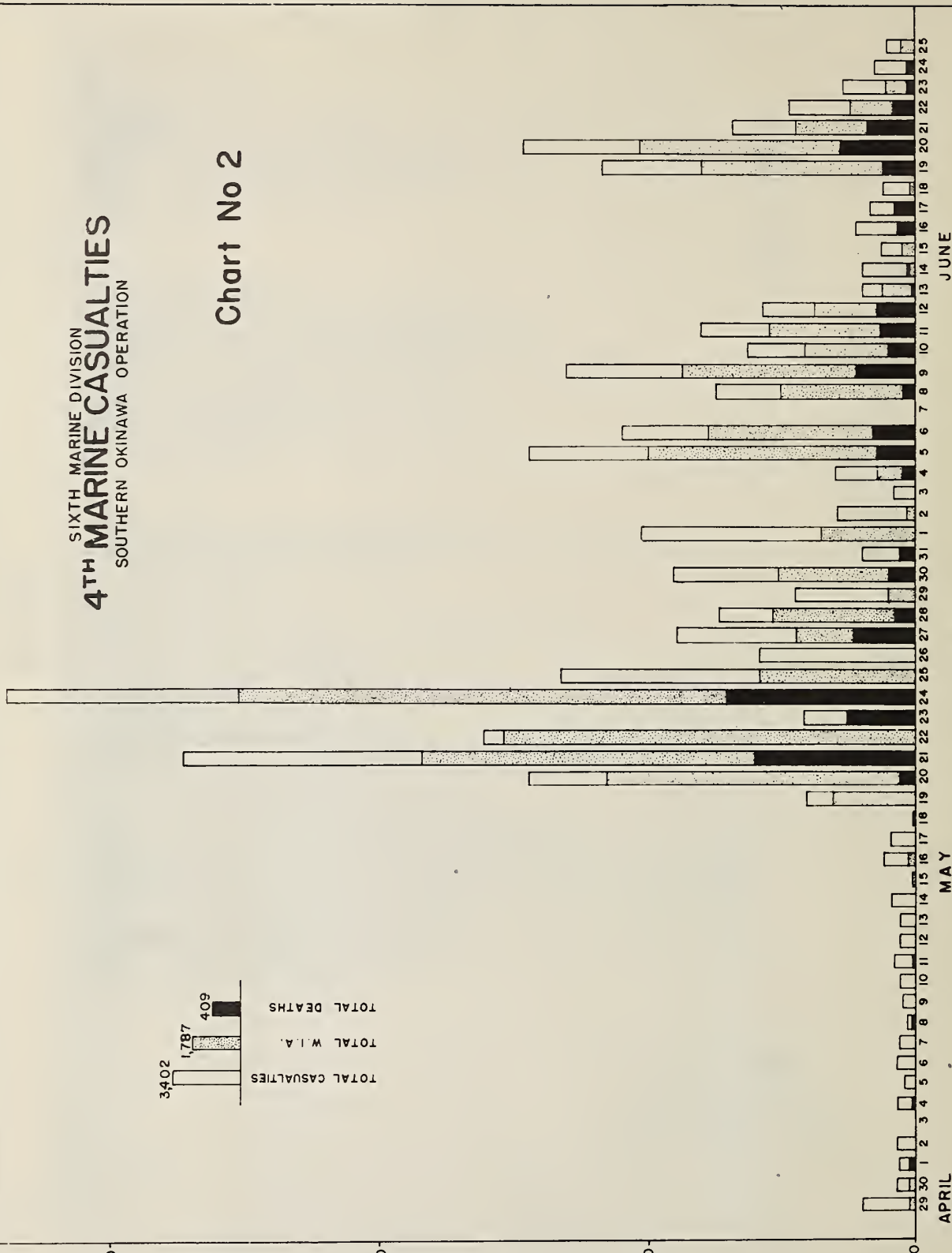


SIXTH MARINE DIVISION
4TH MARINE CASUALTIES
 SOUTHERN OKINAWA OPERATION

Chart No 2



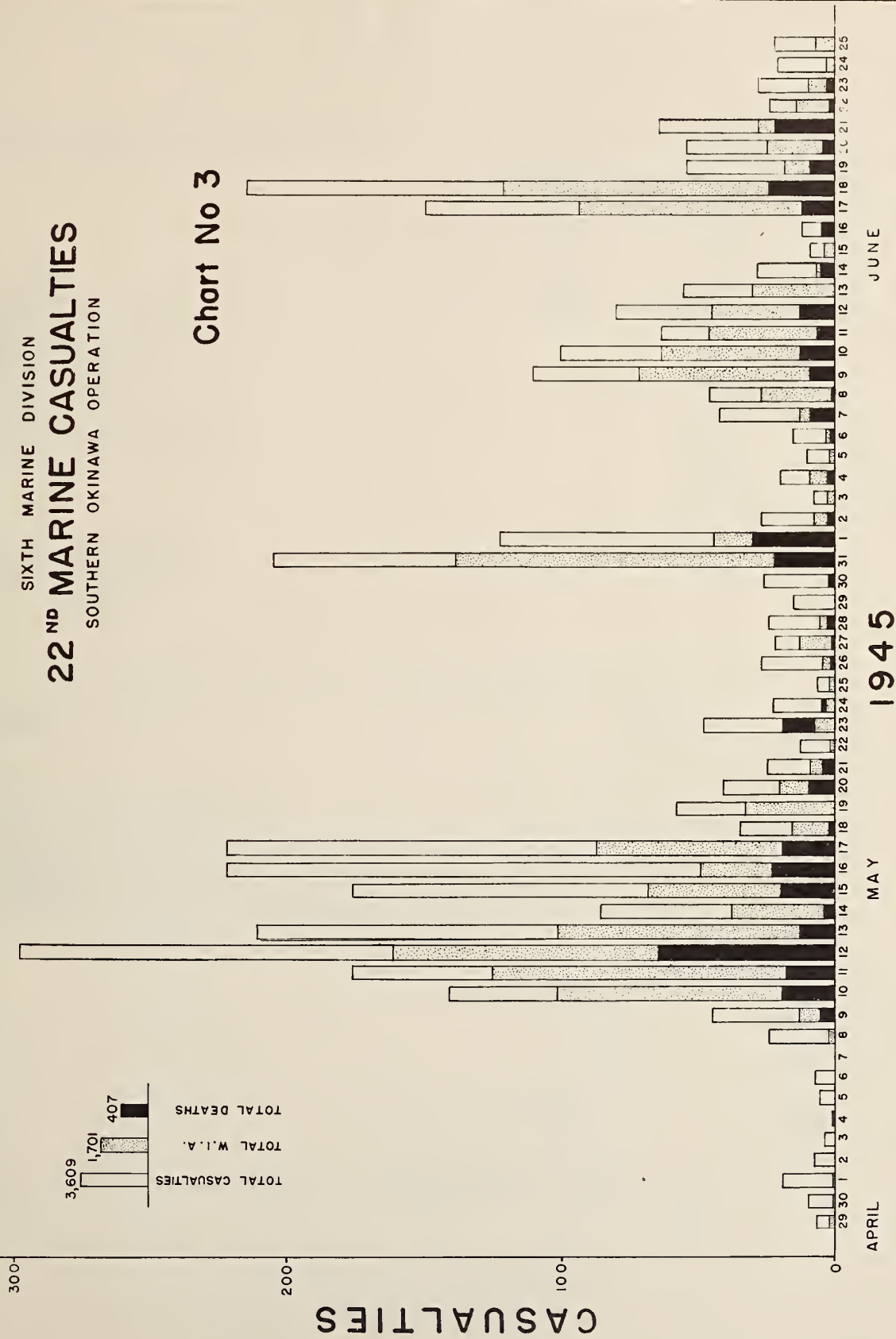
CASUALTIES



1945

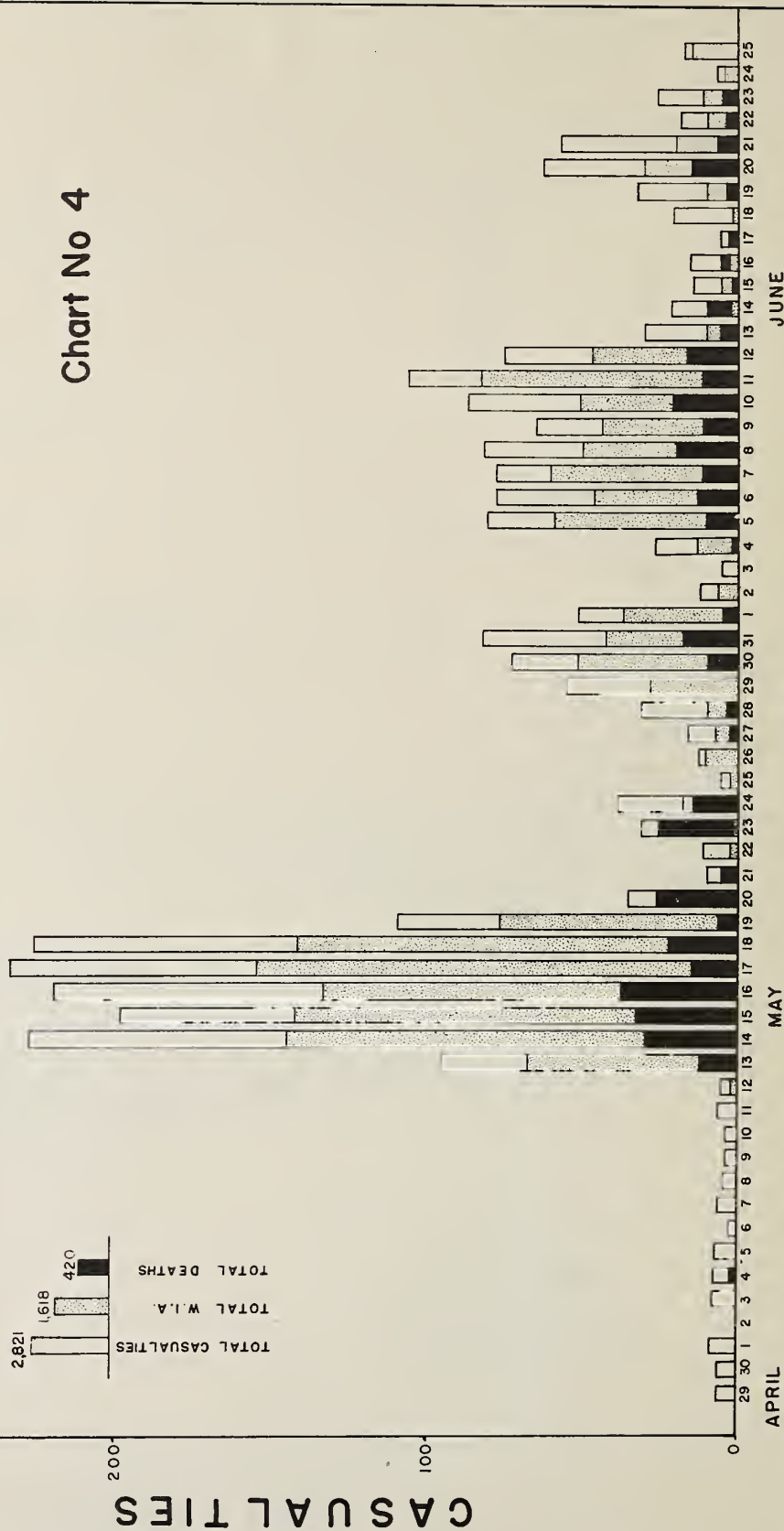
SIXTH MARINE DIVISION
22ND MARINE CASUALTIES
 SOUTHERN OKINAWA OPERATION

Chart No 3



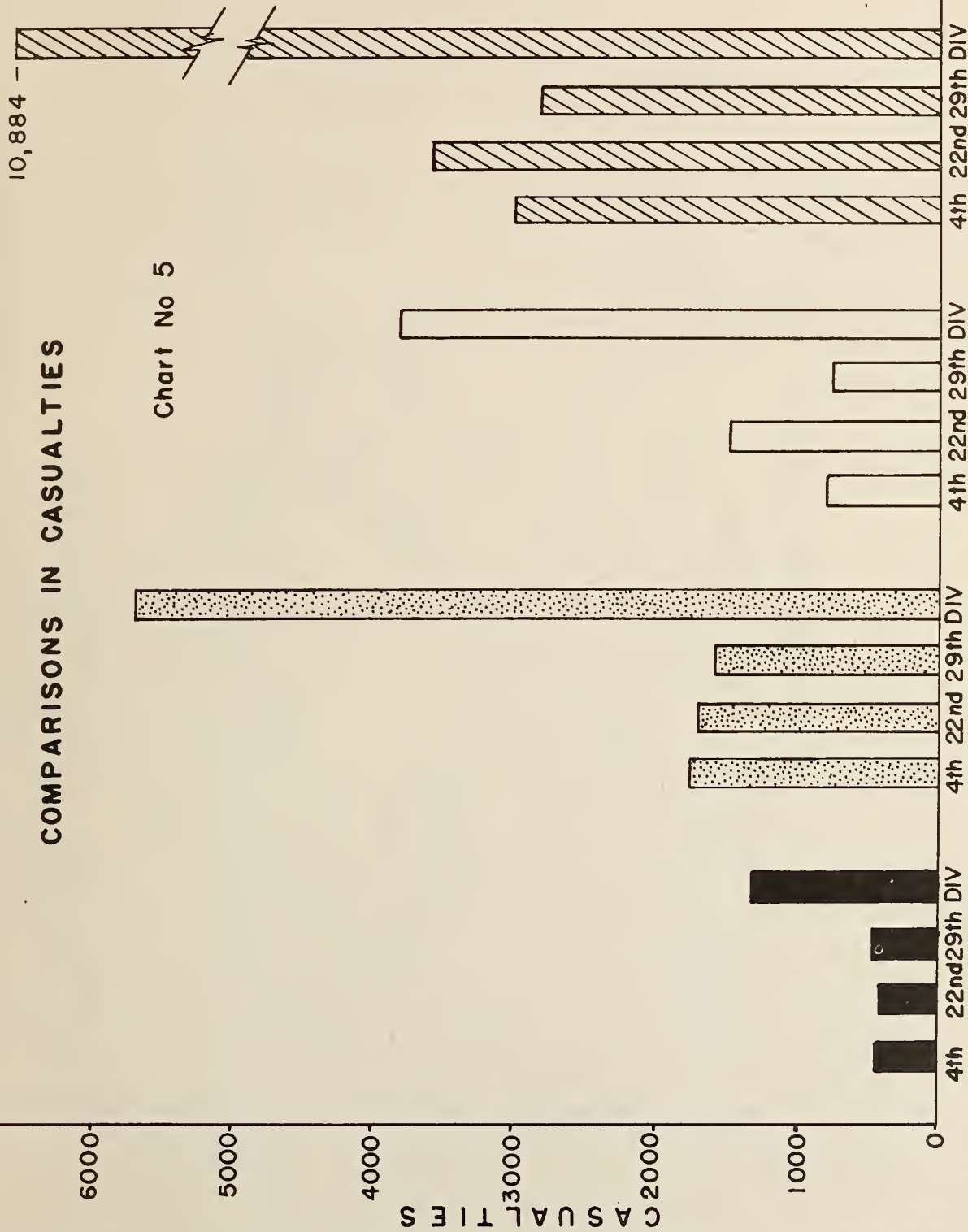
SIXTH MARINE DIVISION
29TH MARINE CASUALTIES
 SOUTHERN OKINAWA OPERATION

Chart No 4



COMPARISONS IN CASUALTIES

Chart No 5



DEATHS

W.I.A.

OTHER

TOTAL CASUALTIES

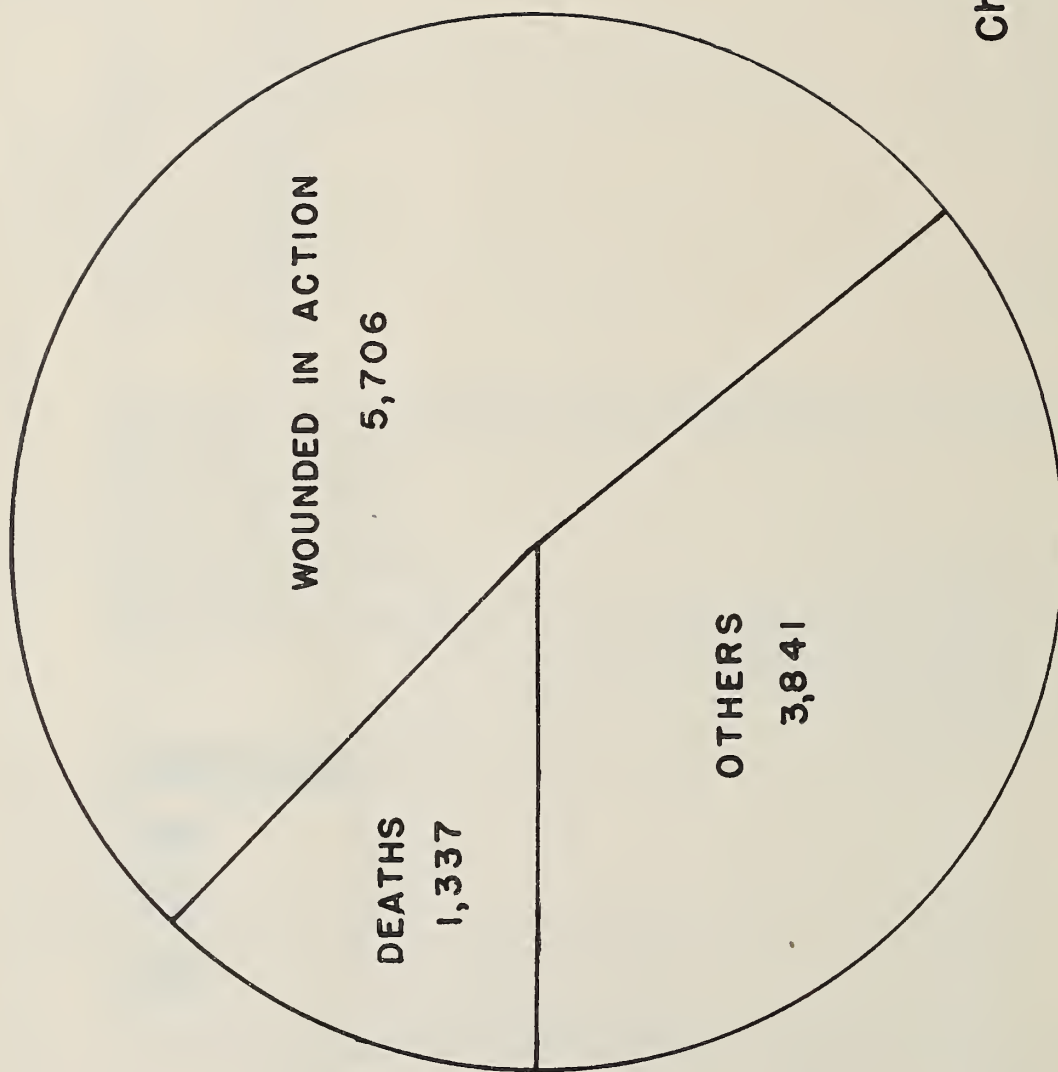


Chart No.6

DISTRIBUTION OF CASUALTIES
April 29 - June 25

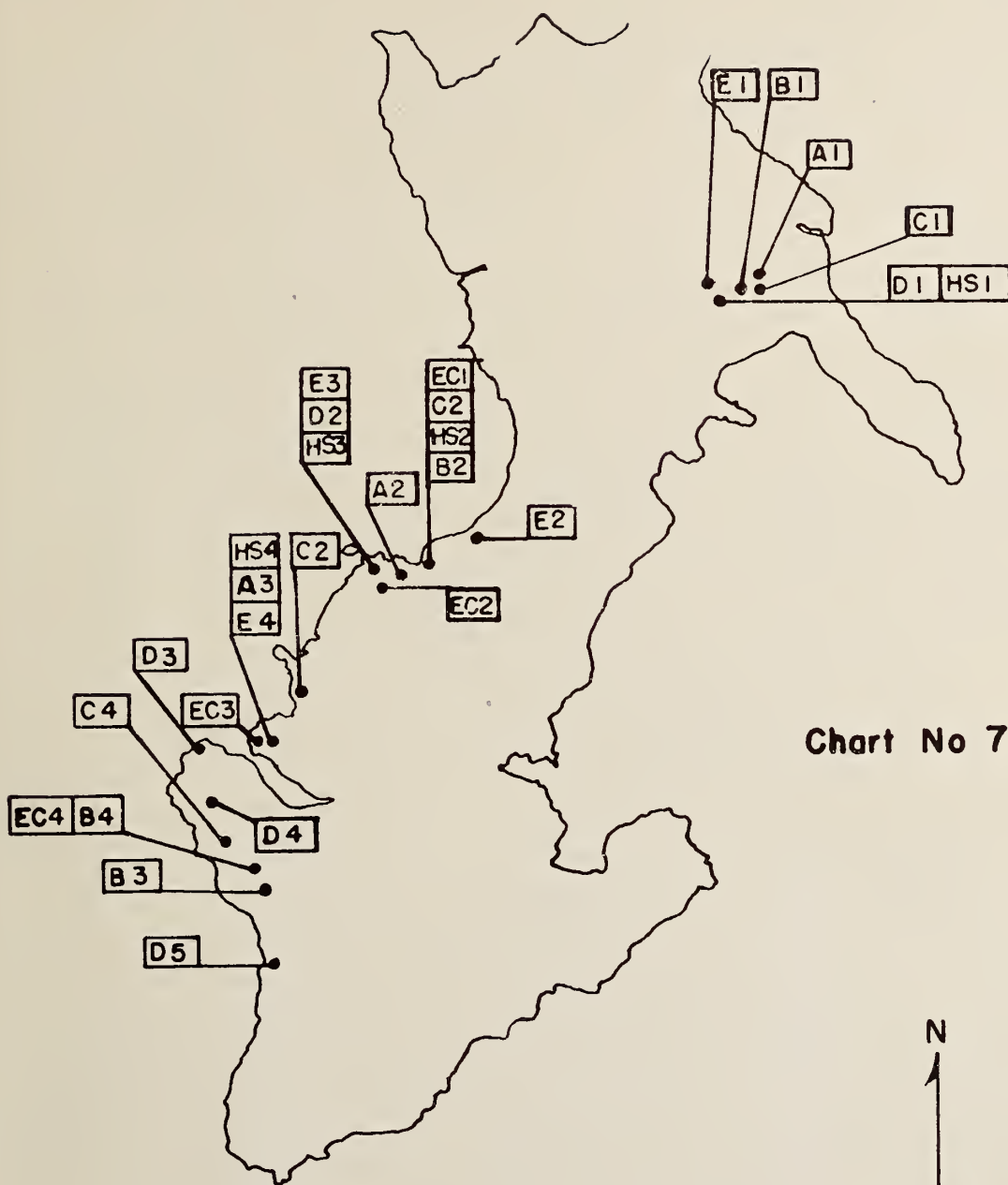
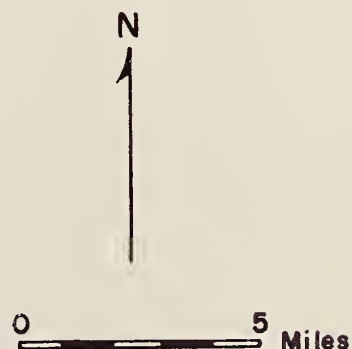
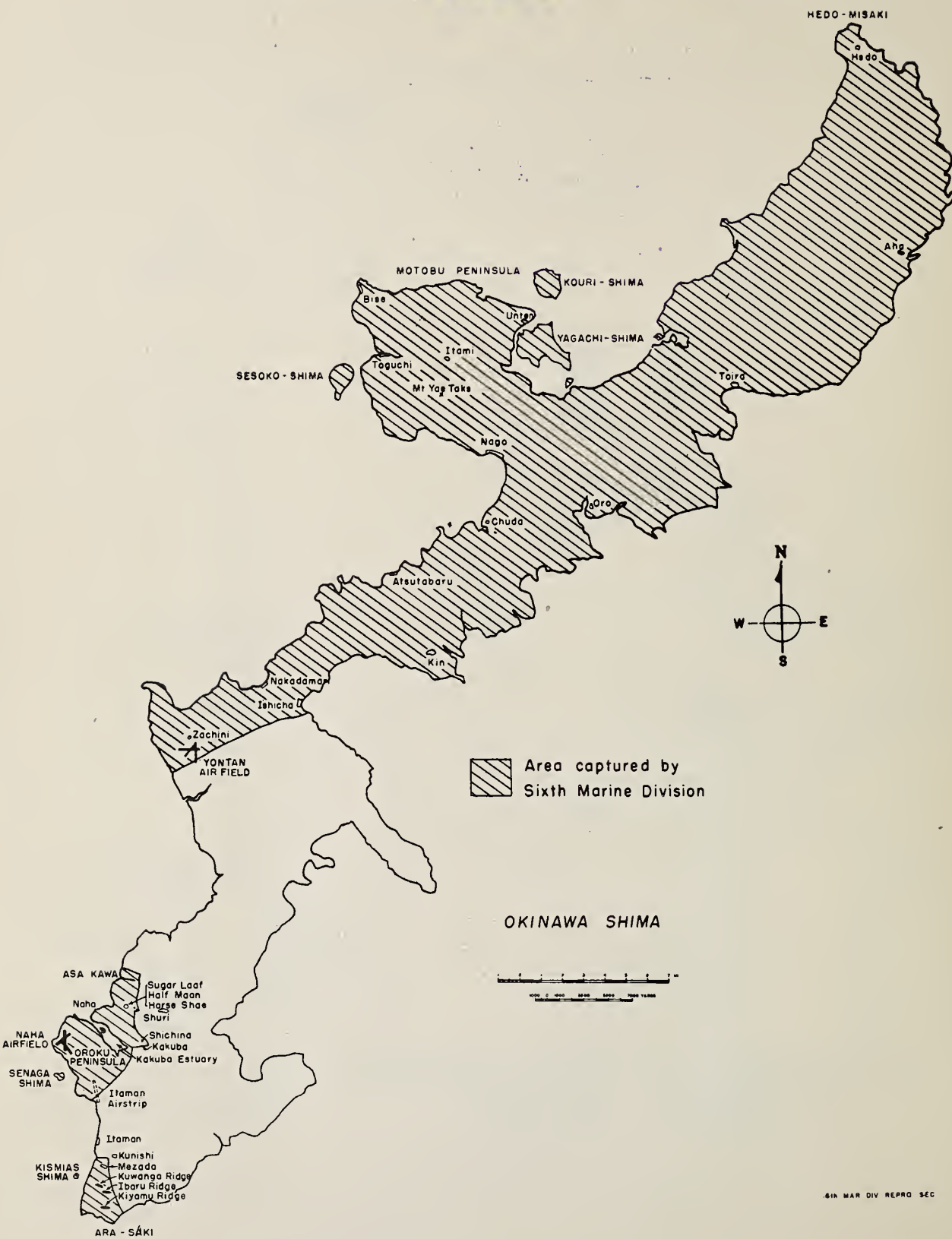
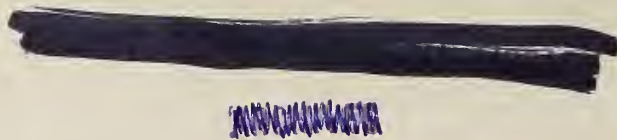


Chart No 7

DISPLACEMENT OF MEDICAL COMPANIES
6th MEDICAL BATTALION
SOUTHERN OKINAWA







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